SEPTEMBER 1995

THE UNESCO COURIER

women

one half of heaven

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THE FOURTH WORLD
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

INTERVIEW WITH
NELSON FREIRE

HERITAGE:
BAROQUE ZACATECAS

ENVIRONMENT:
DRYLANDS AND DESERTS

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M 1205 - 9509 - 22,00 F

woman

Federico Mayor

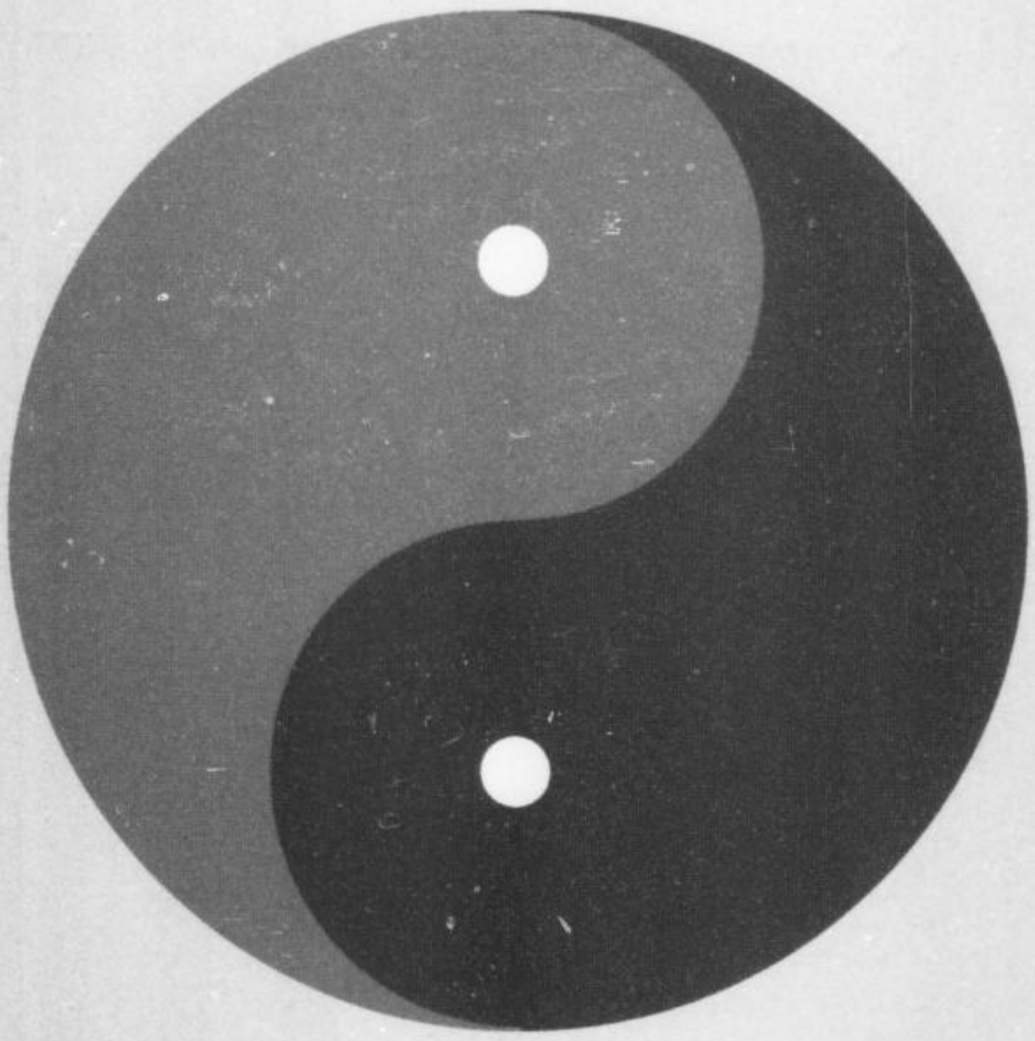
Woman,
you brought with you
a new song.
But we did not let you
speak out
although yours
is the voice
of half
the earth.

Woman,
your eyes
saw the world
another way.
But we did not want
to know the meaning
and the warmth
of your vision.

Woman,
you carried under your skin
of all colours
the seed
of the future,
the light
which could illuminate
different paths,
rebellious
yet peaceful ways,
woman-bridge
woman-bond
woman-root
and fruit of love
and tenderness.

Woman,
your hands outstretched
and your open arms
enfold the immensity
of refuge
and of comfort.
But we have not understood
the strength of your embrace
nor the cry of your silence,
amd we carry on
with neither compass
nor relief.

Woman,
with no other master
but yourself,
live
from now on
equal and free,
now as companion
sharing
the same dream
for ever.



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BELGIUM: Monsieur Jean De Lannoy, 202 av du Roi, 1060 Brussels.
BRAZIL: Editora da Fundacão Getulio Vargas, Divisão de Vendas, Praia de Botafogo, 190 - S/608 - CEP: 22253-900 Rio de Janeiro RJ.
CANADA: Renouf Publishing Company Ltd., Central Distribution Centre, 1294 Algoma Road, Ottawa, Ont. K1B 3W8.
Périodica Inc, 1155 Av. Ducharme, Outremont PQ H2V 1E2.
CHILE: Editorial Universitaria SA, Maria Luisa Santander 0447, Santiago.
CHINA: China National Publications Import & Export Corp., PO Box 88, Beijing.
CZECH REPUBLIC: Artia Pegas Press Ltd, Palac Metro, Narodni trida 25, 110 00 Prague 1.
DENMARK: Munksgaard, Norre Sogade 35, 1370 Copenhagen K.
FINLAND: Akateeminen Kirjakauppa, PO Box 334, 00131 Helsinki.
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GERMANY: Deutsche UNESCO Kommission, Colmantstr. 15, D 53115 Bonn, fax: 02 28 63 69 12
GREECE: Librairie Kauffmann SA, Stadiou 28, 105 64 Athens.
GUATEMALA: Comisión Guatemalteca de Cooperación Con la UNESCO, 3A Avenida 10 29 Zona 1, Apartado Postal 2630, Ciudad de Guatemala.
HONG KONG: Hong Kong Government Information Services Dept., 1 Battery Path Central, Hong Kong.
HUNGARY: Kultura, Periodicals Import Dept, PO Box 149, 1389 Budapest 62.
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Oxford Book & Stationery Co, Code No. D 8208052, Scindia House, New Delhi 110 001.
ISRAEL: Literary Transactions Inc., c/o Steimatsky Ltd. PO Box 1444, Bneibrak 51114.
ITALY: Licosa, Libreria Comm Sansoni S P A Via Duca di Calabria, 1/1, 50125 Florence.
JAPAN: Eastern Book Service Inc., Periodicals Account, 373 Hongo 3 Chome, Bunkyo Ku, Tokyo 113.
KOREA: The Korean National Commission for UNESCO, PO Box Central 64, Seoul.
LUXEMBOURG: Messageries Paul Kraus, 11 rue Christophe Plantin, 2339 Luxembourg.
MALTA: Sapienzas, 26 Republic Street, Valetta.
MAURITIUS: Nalanda Co. Ltd, 30 Bourbon Street, Port Louis.
MEXICO: Librería el Correo de la UNESCO SA, Col Roma, Guanajuanto 72, Deleg Cuauhtemoc, 06700 Mexico City DF.
MOROCCO: Editions La Porte, Librairie aux Belles Images, 281 av Mohamed V, Rabat.
NETHERLANDS: Swets & Zeitlinger BV, P.O. Box 830, 2160 SZ Lisse, Fax: 2521 15888
NEW ZEALAND: GP Publications Limited, PO Box 38900, Petone, Wellington.
NORWAY: Narvesen Info Center, Box 6125 Etterstad, 0602 Oslo 6.
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THAILAND: Suksapan Panit, Mansion 9, Rajadamnern Avenue, Bangkok 2.
TUNISIA: Société Tunisienne de Diffusion, 5 av de Carthage, Tunis.
UNITED KINGDOM: H M Stationery Office, Agency Sec Publications Ctr, 51 Nine Elms Lane, London SW8 5DR.
UNITED STATES: Bernan-Unipub, 4611-F Assembly Drive, Lanham, MD 20706 4391.
URUGUAY: Ediciones Trecho SA Cuento Periodicos, Maldonado 1090, Montevideo.
VENEZUELA: UNESCO Cresalc, Apartado Postal 68394, Altamira, Caracas 1062 A.

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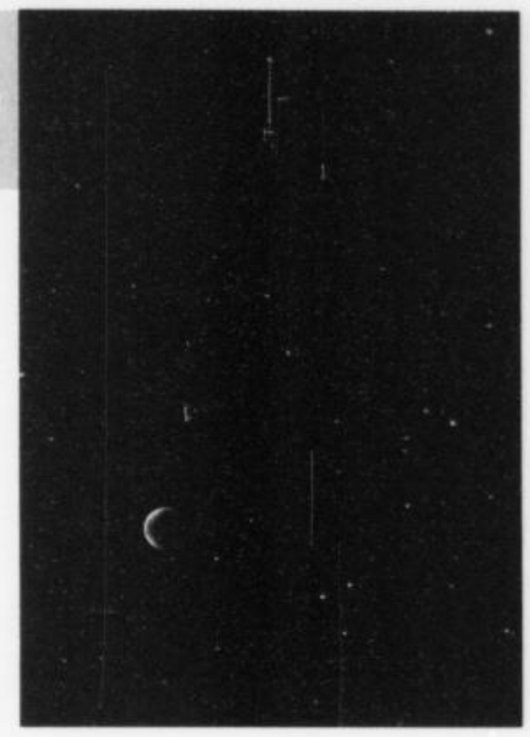
SEPTEMBER 1995



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THE UNESCO COURIER

48th year
Published monthly in
30 languages and in Braille

"The Governments of the States parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare,
"that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed . . .
"that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.
"For these reasons, the States parties . . . are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives. . . ."

EXTRACT FROM THE PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF UNESCO, LONDON, 16 NOVEMBER 1945

THE UNESCO COURIER

48th YEAR
Published monthly in 30 languages and in Braille by Unesco, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
31, rue François Bonvin, 75732 Paris CEDEX 15, France.
Fax: (33-1) 45.66.92.70
Internet: unesco. courier@unesco.org

Director: Bahgat Elnadi
Editor-in-chief: Adel Rifaat

EDITORIAL STAFF (Paris)
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English edition: Roy Malkin
French edition: Alain Lévêque
Spanish edition: Miguel Labarca, Araceli Ortiz de Urbina
Features: Jasmina Sopova
Art Unit/Production: Georges Servat
Illustrations: Ariane Bailey (Tel. 45.68.46.90)
Documentation: José Banaag (Tel. 45.68. 46.85)
Liaison with non-Headquarters editions and press: Solange Belin (Tel. 45.68.46.87)
Secretariat: Annie Brachet (Tel. 45.68.47.15),
Administrative Assistant: Theresa Pinck
Selection in Braille in English, French, Spanish and Korean: Mouna Chatta (Tel. 45.68.47.14)
Artwork Consultants: Eric Frogé

NON-HEADQUARTERS EDITIONS
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German: Dominique Anderes (Berne)
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SALES AND PROMOTION. Fax: 45.68.45.89
Subscriptions: Marie-Thérèse Hardy (Tel. 45.68.45.65), Jocelyne Despouy, Jacqueline Louise-Julie, Manichan Ngonekeo, Michel Ravassard, Mohamed Salah El Din (Tel. 45.68.49.19)
Customer service: Ginette Motreff (Tel. 45.68.45.64)
Accounts: (Tel. 45.68.45.65)
Shipping: Daniel Meister (Tel. 45.68.47.50)

SUBSCRIPTIONS. Tel.: 45.68.45.65
1 year: 211 French francs. 2 years: 396 FF.
Students: 1 year: 132 French francs
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IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE (Printed in France)
DÉPOT LÉGAL: C1 - SEPTEMBRE 1995
COMMISSION PARITAIRE N° 71844 - DIFFUSÉ PAR LES N.M.P.P.
Photocomposition, photogravure: Le Courrier de l'Unesco.
Impression: MAURY IMPRIMEUR,
Z.I. Route d'Étampes, 45331 Malsherbes
ISSN 0041-5278 N° 9-1995-OPI-95-540 A

This issue comprises 52 pages and a 4-page insert between pages 2-3 and 50-51.

Month by month

The women's liberation movement has a long history, but it is only in the last twenty-five years that it has become a world phenomenon. In the countries of the South the conditions in which women as a group could set forth their demands did not come about until the end of the colonial period, with the gradual opening up of societies that had hitherto been cut off from the rest of the world, the undermining of patriarchal systems, and the coming of a time when the members of the new middle classes began to express their identity as individuals.

The shock waves that had radiated from the United States and Europe in the nineteenth century and had reached upper-class Indian, Chinese and Egyptian women in the years after the First World War now began to have a worldwide impact.

As it passed beyond the pioneering stage and won an immense popular following, the women's emancipation movement gained in effectiveness what it may have lost in radical spirit. No longer to be regarded as one side in a war between the sexes, it has become part of a political, social, legal and personal struggle against power and behaviour patterns based on inequality. Women engaged in this struggle find themselves confronting men and even sometimes other women; but they also find that more and more men are joining their ranks.

The purpose of the struggle is that women should fulfil themselves in equal dignity with men; find scope for their talents in all the areas and at all the levels of responsibility that have until now been an exclusively male preserve; and have the same social rights as men and above all the same chances of success. Perhaps it is even more important that they should make their contribution to humankind's attempts to answer basic questions—about life and death, the family and society, economic development and the future of the world.

Self-expression by women on equal terms with men in every area of life—personal, social, physical, intellectual and spiritual—is liberating tremendous creative and productive forces, encouraging new forms of participation and at the same time changing men's attitudes.

The oppression of women within the family has been at the heart of all social domination systems for thousands of years. The ending of this oppression may lead eventually to the collapse of other forms of domination. In this process our common future is at stake.

BAHGAT ELNADI AND ADEL RIFAAT

Two surgeons, a woman and a man, perform an operation together (France).

A time for partnership

by Riane Eisler

Today's questioning of sex roles and relations is part of a broader movement towards greater democracy and egalitarianism

Men are from Mars, proclaims a recent book title, and women are from Venus. This two-planet image vividly expresses the lingering belief that women and men are fundamentally and unalterably different.

But if it were true that women and men are inherently so different, how is it that their differences differ so much from one time and place to another? For example, in Victorian England the mark of real femininity was a "ladylike" paleness and weakness, whereas in Kenya real femininity was traditionally proved by a woman's ability to do very hard work on behalf of her family. In the Samurai Age of Japan, real masculinity was proving oneself a fierce warrior, whereas among the Hopi Indians of North America men were supposed to be peaceful, agreeable, and non-aggressive.

Not only that, but over the last decades the roles and relations of women and men have been changing at a very rapid pace. For example, large numbers of women have in many Western nations begun to do things that were once considered exclusively men's work, such as the work of doctors, plumbers, engineers, lawyers, welders and university professors—all highly-paid professions and trades from which women were once barred. Similarly, men have begun to redefine fathering to include some of the "women's work" of feeding, diapering, and otherwise caring for and nurturing babies.

Moreover, even against enormous resistance, women's and men's relations have gradually become more egalitarian. At the same time, although more slowly, once firmly entrenched beliefs that men, and what men do, are more important than women and what women do, have also begun to change—with such commonplace remarks as "hope next time it's a boy" increasingly considered offensive by both new mothers and fathers.

For some people, both women and men, these changes are a source of hope for a more humane, less violent, less unjust future: one where one kind of person (be it a person of a different race, nationality, religion or sex) is no longer viewed as of a lower order than another. But for others, these changes are a source of confusion and fear, yet another complexity to be dealt with in a far too rapidly changing world.

Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919), revolutionary and political theorist, Germany/Poland.

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), nurse, United Kingdom

Women, men and human relations

It is certainly true that our world has been changing very fast over the last few hundred years, so fast that, in the words of the futurologist Alvin Toffler, it has put some people in "future shock". Rapid technological and economic changes have destabilized not only established habits of work, but long-standing habits of thinking and acting. This has been the source of much dislocation and stress. But as modern history drastically demonstrates, technological and economic change has also opened the door

"As we can still see today from their beautiful nature-celebrating art, the Minoans of Crete also seem to have had a great respect not only for women but for our Mother Earth: what we today would call an ecological consciousness."
Above, a detail from a fresco in the Palace of Knossos (1600-1400 B.C.) in Crete.

for questioning much that was once taken for granted—be it the once supposedly divinely-ordained right of kings and princes to absolute authority, or the once also supposedly divinely-ordained right of men to absolute authority in the "castles" of their homes.

The questioning we see all over the world today of sex roles and relations is thus part of a much larger questioning. It is also part of a much larger movement for change: the global movement toward more democratic and egalitarian relations in *both* the so-called private and public spheres.

In fact, once we examine the constant interaction between the private and public spheres, it is possible to see patterns or connexions that were invisible in older studies, because these focused almost exclusively on the public or men's world from which women and children were excluded. These patterns or connexions show something that once articulated seems self-evident: that the way a society organizes the roles and relations of the two halves of humanity—which is what men and women are—profoundly affects everything in our lives.

For example, how these roles and relations are organized is a critical factor in how a society structures the family. Societies where women's and men's roles are rigidly circumscribed, which are generally also rigidly male-dominated societies, are by and large also societies where we see a generally authoritarian, top-down family structure. Even more specifically, it tends to be a family where men rule over women and parents rule over children, with this rule ultimately backed up by fear and force. On the other hand, societies where women's and men's roles are more flexible and there is more equality between women and men tend to have more democratic families, with less socially condoned use of fear and force.

Moreover, societies characterized by more rigid male dominance (where sex roles are also more rigid) are generally also more authoritarian. For example, with the rise to power of Hitler in Germany and the imposition of a brutally authoritarian and very violent regime, there was much emphasis on returning women to their "traditional" roles in a male-dominated family. Conversely, in the Scandinavian nations, strong emphasis on sexual equality has gone along with both political and economic democracy, as well as with social priority given to activities stereotypically associated with women such as child care, health care and environmental housekeeping.

A new view of the past

Further light is shed on these connexions by archaeological studies such as those of the Lithuanian-American archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, the British archaeologist James Mellaart, and the Greek archaeologist Nicolas Platon. These studies indicate that, contrary to what we have been taught, the earliest cradles of civilization were not authoritarian, male-dominant and chronically warlike. There are strong indications that these prehistoric societies (for example, Catal Huyuk in Turkey, which dates back approximately 8,000 years) were more peaceful and egalitarian societies in which, significantly, women were not dominated by men.

Thus, Platon notes that in the highly technologically developed Minoan civilization that flourished on the Mediterranean island of Crete

RIANE EISLER,
of the United States, is co-founder of the Center for Partnership Studies in California. She is the author of many articles and books, notably *The Chalice and The Blade: Our History, Our Future* (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1990), which has been widely translated. Her most recent work, *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth and the Politics of the Body*, has just been published.

approximately 3,500 years ago the influence of women is evident, and that this was a remarkably peaceful and prosperous society in which "the whole of life was pervaded by an ardent faith in the goddess Nature." As we can still see today from their beautiful nature-celebrating art, the Minoans also seem to have had a great respect not only for women but for our Mother Earth: what we today would call an ecological consciousness.

So here again we see the variability of women's and men's roles and relations, and how these roles and relations are affected by, and in turn affect, social structure. We see that stereotypically "feminine" values such as nurturance and non-violence can be embraced by men, and that women can take on stereotypically "masculine" roles of social and religious governance. Most important, we see that neither war nor the war of the sexes is inevitable.

But I want to emphasize an important matter. There is no evidence that, because women in these societies seem to have held high social and religious positions, men were dominated by women. In other words, these societies were neither matriarchies nor patriarchies. They conformed more to what I would call a partnership rather than a dominator model of social organization: a form of organization that offers a viable alternative to the complex tensions that are inherent in relations based on domination and subordination.

Gender equity and quality of life

Indeed, if we re-examine modern history from this larger perspective, we see that underneath its many complex currents and cross-currents lies a powerful movement towards a partnership social organization, countered by strong resistance to it. We see that all the modern progressive movements have basically been movements challenging different forms of domination backed by force and fear. This is the common thread in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rights of man, anti-slavery, anti-monarchist, socialist, pacifist and feminist movements. In the same way, the twentieth-century anti-colonialist, anti-war, participatory democracy, women's rights and economic justice movements are not isolated phenomena. They are all part of a much larger movement: the movement to create a world in which—be it in our global family of nations or in our individual families—principles of partnership rather than domination and submission are primary.

Moreover, we see that the contemporary movement toward gender equity is an integral part of this larger partnership movement. This should not surprise us, since the domination of one half of humanity by the other is a basic model for all forms of domination. Conversely, the equal valuing of the two halves of humanity teaches children from early on to value diversity, rather than seeing it as a reason for ranking "superior" people over "inferior" ones.

This is why those parts of our world where the movement to raise the status of women has been most successful are also more generally democratic. Even beyond this, a recent statistical survey of eighty-nine countries conducted by the Center for Partnership Studies indicates that if the movement towards sexual equality continues, we can also predict a generally higher quality of life for all.

This study, entitled "Gender Equity and the Quality of Life", shows the Scandinavian nations on the average with both the highest gender equity and the highest quality of life. It also verifies that there is a strong correlation between, on the one hand, such gender inequity indicators as substantially lower female than male literacy, high maternal mortality, and low female participation in government and, on the other, indicators of a generally lower quality of life for all such as high infant mortality, a high number of refugees fleeing a country, and a high ratio of Gross Domestic Product going to the wealthiest as opposed to the poorest 20 per cent of the population. Furthermore, the study indicates that areas where the movement for women's rights has made the least progress also tend to be those where human rights ratings are generally lower.

In short, the way in which a society structures the relations between women and men is of profound personal, social and economic significance. It is encouraging that many governments worldwide are beginning to pass laws to equalize the position of women and men, following the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This will obviously vastly improve women's quality of life. But it is also essential if we are to move to a world of greater partnership and peace, not only between men and women but between the diverse nations, races, religions and ethnic groups on our planet. ■

Anna Pavlova (1881-1931), dancer, Russia.

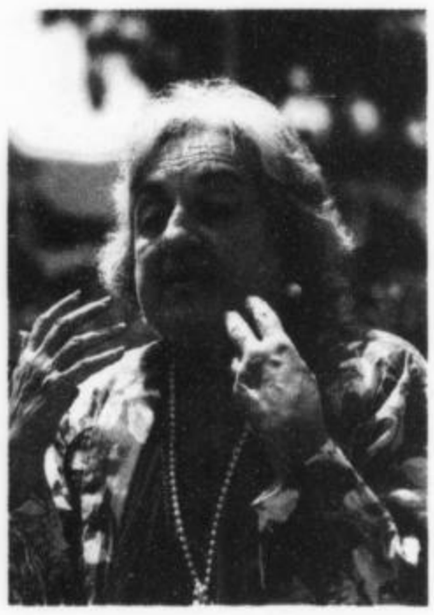
Petra Kelly (1947-1992), politician (ecologist movement), Germany.

A family in a Burkina Faso village.

Betty Friedan

THE NORTH
A DISTURBING INDEPENDENCE

The well-known American feminist writer and organizer Betty Friedan is the author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), a classic of feminist literature. In 1966 she founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), whose goals included the legalization of abortion and recognition of the principle of equal pay for equal work.



■ Women's movements are now at least thirty years old in the West. What progress has been made in that time?

— The modern women's movement began thirty years ago, but the battle for women's rights began a hundred years ago and seemed to end, in the United States at any rate, in 1920 when women won the right to vote. In 1963, when my book *The Feminine Mystique* came out, the only image of woman was that defined solely in terms of her sexual relation to man—as wife, as mother, as housewife—not as a person defining herself through her own actions in society.

That image became especially pervasive in the years after the Second World War when the men came back from the war and took their jobs back, and women, who had been working, had to return home again. During the Depression and the war there had been two generations of women who had not had babies. Now they started to have babies again, and industry needed them as housewives to sell to. The old image of a woman's place being in the home came back in—the majority of women in America used to work a little before marriage, but basically they married and had children. Very few women who didn't marry worked outside the home. Anyway, the story of the battle for women's rights seemed to be over.

History books date the beginning of the modern feminist movement to my book because I broke *through* the feminine mystique and stated that women are persons and as such are entitled to their human and American birthright: equality of opportunity and the right to have their voices heard when society takes decisions.

Over the last thirty years in the United States and elsewhere women's movements have been fighting for equal opportunities in education and employment, for women to control their own bodies, for the right to choose. Women have fought to define ground-rules in fields and professions such as the law and medicine which had hitherto been defined only by men in terms of male experience. In the United States we have succeeded to a large extent in achieving those objectives. We have laws on equal opportunity, employment and education. We have made sex discrimination illegal in the way that race discrimination is supposed to be illegal.

Women now occupy management and leadership positions in every field and profession. They make 70 cents for every dollar men make. Their enrolment rates in medical and law schools have risen from 4 per cent to nearly 50 per cent. Women who used to cook the church suppers are now preaching the sermons. They are showing new styles of leadership in management. They have become empowered politically, and their votes can be decisive in elections. Far more women have been elected to national, state and city offices than ever before, and more women are being named as judges.

■ What areas remain unconquered for women? Has there been a backlash?

— It's hard to overestimate how vast the changes have been! In most Western countries and increasingly in the developing countries there is a growing feminist consciousness. Women take for granted that they are entitled to equal opportunity, that they have the ability and the right to choose.

But yes, there has been a backlash in the United States, and it is partly due to economic turmoil. There has been increasing economic polarization—the top 1 per cent control 40 per cent of the wealth of the nation. The ranks of the poor and homeless, large numbers of whom are women, are growing, and the middle class has its back to the wall. Middle-class families in America survive because there are two incomes, and the great majority of women work outside the home and earn roughly half the family income. But women's jobs are increasingly contract-work, without health benefits and security. Downsizing means that jobs are disappearing and more and more workers are being laid off. The main victims of this are men, the so-called "angry white males." Their frustration is funneled and manipulated into a backlash against women and racial minorities. In the United States, they are trying to cut out programmes for women, children, the elderly and the poor. They are pitting white men against blacks, women and immigrants, and they are trying to get rid of affirmative action—

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Aminata Traoré

THE SOUTH
A JOINT STRUGGLE

Aminata Traoré (see "Five women in the spotlight", page 34) is a Malian social psychologist whose extensive fieldwork has brought her wide first-hand experience of African conditions. In Mali she has founded a cultural centre (the Santoro) and the Hampâté Bâ cultural centre.

■ **The women's liberation movement in the West began about thirty years ago. What has it brought to the women of the South?**

— I can't speak for all the women of the South. I can only express my opinion as a black woman from sub-Saharan Africa who thinks that her destiny is closely linked to that of her continent and that she has no right to be fighting the wrong battle. I think I can say that broadly speaking we African women are determined to distinguish ourselves from Western feminism. Many women's associations in Africa insist on being regarded as "feminine" rather than "feminist".

I would add that I respect the struggle waged by Western feminists. That struggle is motivated by their own specific experience of life and pain, which I have no right to interpret or judge. I would be happy if this rule of mutual respect and reciprocity could also be applied to their relationships with the women of the South. That is not always the case. They have appropriated to themselves the right to interfere in our affairs, to dissect and pass judgement on them and to draw conclusions that have sometimes become action programmes against which we can do nothing.

This intrusion into our societies, where the priorities are different, blocks our view of the horizon, displaces our familiar landmarks and puts us in a state of dependence that we should no longer accept.

■ **Can the principle of equal rights between men and women be adapted to the societies of the South?**

— Equal rights is a rallying cry that nowadays has a meaning and an emotional charge so intense that it is hard to shrug them off. But the lessons of our own history suggest that we should give a more qualified answer to this question.

Surprising though it may seem, I would say that the right to difference and to life that is denied us as dominated black people is more important to me than the race to achieve a hypothetical equality between the sexes. Furthermore, I am not ready to make war on my African brothers with the weapons of Western feminists. I'm more keen on finding common ground with them so that together we can extract our continent from the economic, financial and political situation that is jeopardizing our common future.

I suffer less from sexism than from racism, against which I am far more helpless. But racism doesn't attract as much interest or energy as feminism. Why is this so? Why do we need to be more active and more determined in the struggle against one form of oppression than another? Who decides the priorities?

Structural adjustment programmes and draconian measures such as the devaluation of 12 January 1991 that overnight deprived millions of women in French-speaking Africa of the bare necessities (essential foodstuffs, health care, drinking water and school supplies for children), are only half-heartedly condemned. In situations of serious deprivation like these, where men, women and children are living on the edge of survival, what matters is solidarity between the sexes rather than equal rights.

Most Western feminists have gone over to the neo-liberals in their international institutions for funding development. Together they want to liberate us from our cultural realities which they regard as archaic, and from our governments which they consider to be corrupt. Privatization and decentralization seem to have become synonymous with women's liberation in the poor countries!

Concentration on equality between men and women is part and parcel of a social model based on competition where man is a predator on man and even more so on woman. Our situation is different. If equality between men and women is to replace older forms of solidarity in our societies, it is for African women to take that decision and to organize themselves accordingly.

■ **What are the major demands of women in the South? How can their status be improved by integrating them into the economy?**

— The struggle against humiliation and destruction should be one of the main commitments of women in the South, especially the women of Africa south of the Sahara. I don't think that going to Beijing with women from other regions of the world should make us lose sight of the grave problems facing our continent. In my opinion, the priorities are as follows:

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the enforcement of the laws on sex discrimination and race discrimination.

The backlash is also taking the form of attempts by fundamentalist religious groups to undo the right to abortion, the right of women to control their own bodies, in short, to push women back into the home again. I think in many countries there is an uneasiness about women's growing independence.

■ Is the quest for equality between women and men continuing?

— There must be equality of opportunities between men and women. In many countries women have no control over property or inheritance, and aren't allowed to earn. They are dependent on men, and in every single profession the ground-rules are defined by men. When women can move as equals in society because of what they have achieved, their voices and experiences have a special value because they have fought for equal opportunity.

■ In all societies, in both the North and the South, the liberation of women has led to outbreaks of violence against women. Why is this?

— Violence is a symptom of the prevailing economic stress and the polarization between the wealthy and the poor. In the United States men, including college-educated whites, can no longer take a career, a profession and life-long dominance for granted. These are times of turmoil. Men are more dependent than ever on women. Also women are now reporting the violence—battering and rape—more often than they did. Before, it was considered a man's right to beat up his wife. But this violence shouldn't be seen in terms of sexual politics. Women are being treated as a scapegoat for the increasing economic pressures on men. It is not enough to have shelters for battered women and to take punitive measures against men. Women must come up with a new vision of community with men.

■ What particular qualities do women bring to the workplace and to management?

— Women are showing new styles of leadership in management that seem to be very well geared to today's society and economy, which put a premium on flexibility and the ability to adjust to change. What seems to emerge from studies—as I know from my experience as a consultant to a number of large companies and to the U.S. army—is that in a crisis and conditions of enormous change, the hierarchical chain of command and the military model of control break down. There has to be flexibility, there has to be non-hierarchical, autonomous responsibility. Women bring this to the table as well as an ability to mobilize people for a common goal and a common vision.

■ What are your hopes for the Beijing conference and for the future?

— It is clear that women will not be pushed back and that going forward no longer means just the fight for women's rights; it's no longer just a question of women being paid equally to men. There must be a bridging between women and men. There must be a new vision of community that inspires the restructuring of work and home. New importance must be attached to community networks and services. The priority must be to achieve a good life for everyone—women, men, children, the elderly and the poor, young and old, black and white—and to bring to an end the polarizing differences that are still tearing our nations and our world apart. ■

Interview by Judithe Bizot

A demonstration of solidarity at the Third United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi (Kenya) in 1985.

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a) dismantling the mechanisms of poverty and exclusion and freeing financial resources. This approach goes far beyond the anti-poverty programmes that are currently being considered. In this regard African women must be able to dismantle the mechanisms of development funding, and above all the way in which debts are contracted;

b) democratization, which will guarantee African men and women the right to decide for themselves and challenge their governments and their foreign partners;

c) the strengthening, through information and training, of women's decision-making powers and their capacity to act.

■ In both North and South it is clear that women's liberation has led to a rise in violence on the part of men. Is it unrealistic to look for solutions to this worldwide trend?

— I shouldn't really answer this question since I refuse to equate the liberation of women with equal rights with men. In our countries everybody's rights—economic, political and cultural—are flouted and not only because of the regimes currently in power. Where violence perpetrated by men is concerned, I should simply like to point out that human beings—men, women, children, young and old—all need their social, professional and economic roles to be recognized. These roles can change gradually without major upsets or disruptions. The frustrations this may cause must be dealt with by mutual concessions on the part of those involved.

Once men have lost their jobs they don't know which way to turn. Is it really so surprising that they grow violent towards women and children? They are more to be pitied than blamed. When will we understand the complexity of the underlying factors that determine human behaviour and personal relationships?

■ What are you hoping for in the foreseeable future?

— In Africa the greatest impediments to women's advancement are economic and political. But international thinking merely condemns our societies and our cultures. The fact is that many parents would like their daughters to attend school and complete their studies. Farmers would like their wives to work less and have access to health care and drinkable water. Most men would like their wives to have a paid job. What stands in the way of all this? An unfair economic and financial system that leaves vulnerable groups few opportunities for survival. We lack resources, indigenous expertise and appropriate methodologies. ■

Interview by Judithe Bizot and Danièle Granet

Pride without prejudice

by Anees Jung

South Asian women question oppressive traditions

"I have a better life today than I did when my husband was alive," said Zapathan. A statement like this from a Muslim widow in Bangladesh would have been unthinkable twenty years ago, and I was taken by surprise when Zapathan made it. Sitting on a wobbly chair, her feet twisted in plastic sandals that did not match, she uttered the words without a trace of guilt or embarrassment. The thought that she was dishonouring a very old tradition did not seem to worry her. She had expressed a truth that thousands of impoverished women in Bangladesh are beginning to share, though few have yet begun to voice.

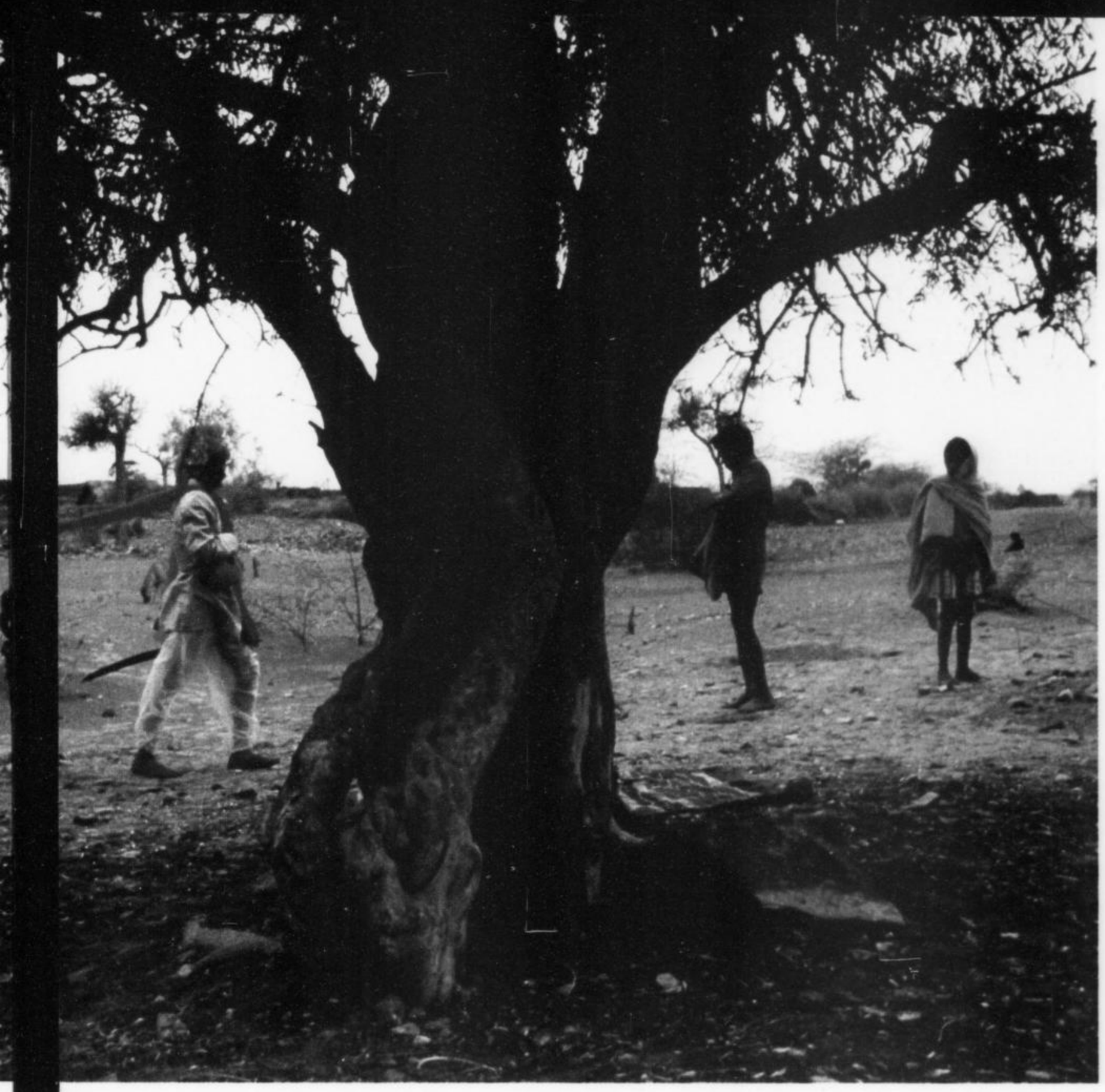
Bangladesh: a merry widow

Zapathan lives in a tiny village in Mirzapur. I met her on the premises of the Grameen Bank[1], where a group of needy women had gathered to collect a modest loan that would help them start a small business, repair a leaking roof or educate a child. The Grameen Bank's revolutionary lending system ensures that husbands, sons or fathers are no longer necessary to help women procure money. A thumb mark that once labelled a woman as backward is today the signature that gets her a loan. It is the first step that leads her to write her own name.

"No one asked me my name before," said Zapathan, saying her name with pride. "While my husband lived, I was his wife, his follower. His word was law." Her husband's law, like that of a king, prevailed in a domain where he had little to protect except a wife. It made her helpless, faceless. Not even the neighbours were aware of her existence. His death opened the door, brought her out of her house and her village and led her to the Grameen Bank, which has helped her more than any relative would have done.

"Those unknown men to whom I could not even talk trusted me and gave me a loan. When I first held 500 takas, my hands trembled." She raised her hand in a salute, a gesture that spoke of power.

A scroll-assisted lecture on breast-feeding in Calcutta (India).



A traditional marriage in a Rajasthan village (India).

Dolores Ibarruri, "La Pasionaria" (1895-1989), political militant, Spain.

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), human rights militant, United States.

India: access to credit

The Working Women's Forum in Madras, South India, all of whose members are needy working women, is driven by the same spirit as the Grameen Bank. As well as providing loans, the Forum organizes training and consciousness-raising activities, night schools for children, and family planning and health-care programmes. It encourages inter-caste marriages and helps fight exploitation, harassment and government obstructionism.

In the last ten years, as the movement has spread, the courage and commitment of its members have grown and they have begun to speak out in public and become leaders. They have learnt to stand up to policemen, government officials, even cabinet ministers. "Why not husbands?" I asked a group of them. They laughed and slowly told me their fears. "He drinks and beats me," said one. "Why don't you hit him back?" I asked provocatively. "That's not our Tamil tradition," she answered. "Why does he beat you?" I asked. "Because he earns," she replied. "But you earn too". "*He* earns more." "If my husband did that to me, I would leave him," said a dark young woman who was not yet married. "You can't divorce and marry again," said the older woman. "No, I won't remarry. I will take a job and bring up my children," answered the young woman. "I thought wisdom came with age," the old woman sighed. "Now the young ones know better than the old ones like me."

"The time is not far off when donkeys will neigh and women will demand to sit on chairs," said a village elder in Gujarat, western India, as he pulled at his hubble bubble.

Pakistan: urbanization, the motor of change

"Change is coming, and it is coming faster than people think," says Akhtar Hameed, the architect of the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi, Pakistan. "Under the pressure of mass migration to the cities and double-digit inflation the role of women is changing dramatically. Urbanization changes attitudes and breaks up traditions. Since one income is no longer enough, women have

A journalist looks over the latest issues of *Dabindu* ("Tears of Sweat"), a newspaper published by a women's community development project in Kataniyaka, on the outskirts of Colombo (Sri Lanka). The newspaper exposes the oppression of women and advises them how to stand up for themselves.

begun to work. The extended family is already beginning to yield to the nuclear family. With women having jobs and education becoming imperative, the rate of population growth is bound to slow down. This will happen in urban areas first, then spread to the villages. It is only a matter of time. What is happening in Orangi is happening everywhere."

Orangi encourages women not to be dependent and urges them to turn their homes into workshops. Family businesses sprout in every lane, and women have begun to be entrepreneurs. The Orangi Trust gives loans to units where 40 per cent of the workers are women. Almost 350 units are managed entirely by women, including stitching centres, general stores, schools, clinics, beauty parlours and embroidery workshops. A recent survey of 585 of Orangi's schools showed that 45 per cent of the 80,000 students were girls. Almost 90 per cent of Orangi's schools are co-educational, and 68 per cent of the teachers are female. "These women and girls," says Akhtar Hameed, "are not in purdah as my mother was. And yet they retain their modesty and their culture. Although they are not wrapped in the chador or confined within four walls, their conduct is not very different from my mother's. Women who belong both to the present and the past, they are the finest achievement of Orangi."

Nepal: the burden of tradition

The image of Nepali rural women that remains in my mind is that of a creature under a basket of hay or manure, a metaphor that goes beyond her working life. "Women have yet to learn to articulate their feelings and anxieties," says Greta Ran, who has launched a magazine about women and called it "Donkey", to match her perception of the peasant woman as a beast of burden. Greta Ran feels that women are conditioned to be silent beasts of burden and that if they begin to have individual feelings they suffer from a sense of guilt.

Indira Koirala, who works with village women at the grassroots level and has just launched a self-reliance project, does not agree. "Women are acquiring the confidence to change their work patterns but not their lives," she says. "They still can't survive independently. They need more time." Since her project began, she has seen a change in them. When a group is formed and given a name, the women feel they have found an identity. They are no longer just wives or mothers; they have the status of members of a group.

"Change is inevitable," said an old Nepali woman named Aama, the Nepali word for "mother". "Even the trails of my youth have changed. I have seen streams and rivers change their courses." Poor and uneducated, she has watched the ebb and flow of life, not without some regrets. The young, she complains, are learning to read and write, but they have lost the gift of knowing that comes from living close to nature, close to tradition.

A shared vision

In Sri Lanka too, where the government and several non-governmental agencies have set up credit and savings societies that are managed and controlled by women, more economic power is coming into the hands of women via small-scale loans. The Janashakti Bank, like the Grameen Bank, distributes loans to groups of five women, each of whom is responsible for maintaining the group's credit. Janashakti too has a payback rate of nearly 95 per cent.

In South Asia women who were afraid even of each other are beginning to share their condition and seek a shared vision. They are forming new groups. The old beliefs no longer correspond to life as it is, and as women seek to renew them they are embarking on a journey along a path to self-discovery. ■

1 See page 15 for an interview with the founder of the Grameen Bank.

ANEES JUNG,
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An interview with **Muhammad Yunus**

A BANK THAT ONLY LENDS TO THE POOR

Muhammad Yunus.

The Grameen Bank, which was founded in Bangladesh in 1983 by Muhammad Yunus, a university professor, has won a unique reputation because it lends only to the very poor. Most of its clients are women. It has inspired similar ventures in other developing countries including Malaysia, the Philippines and Burkina Faso, as well as in France, Canada and the United States.

Miriam Makeba (1932-), singer, South Africa/United States.

Eva Perón (1919-1952), politician, Argentina.

■ **What gave you the idea of founding a bank to help the penniless?**

— When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, everyone was euphoric. We were convinced our lives would change for the better, but instead things went downhill very fast. In 1974 Bangladesh was hit by a famine. At that time I was teaching economics at Chittagong University, and while I was teaching beautiful economic theories, people were dying. This was very hard to accept, and I started thinking about what I could do to help the poor to rise out of poverty.

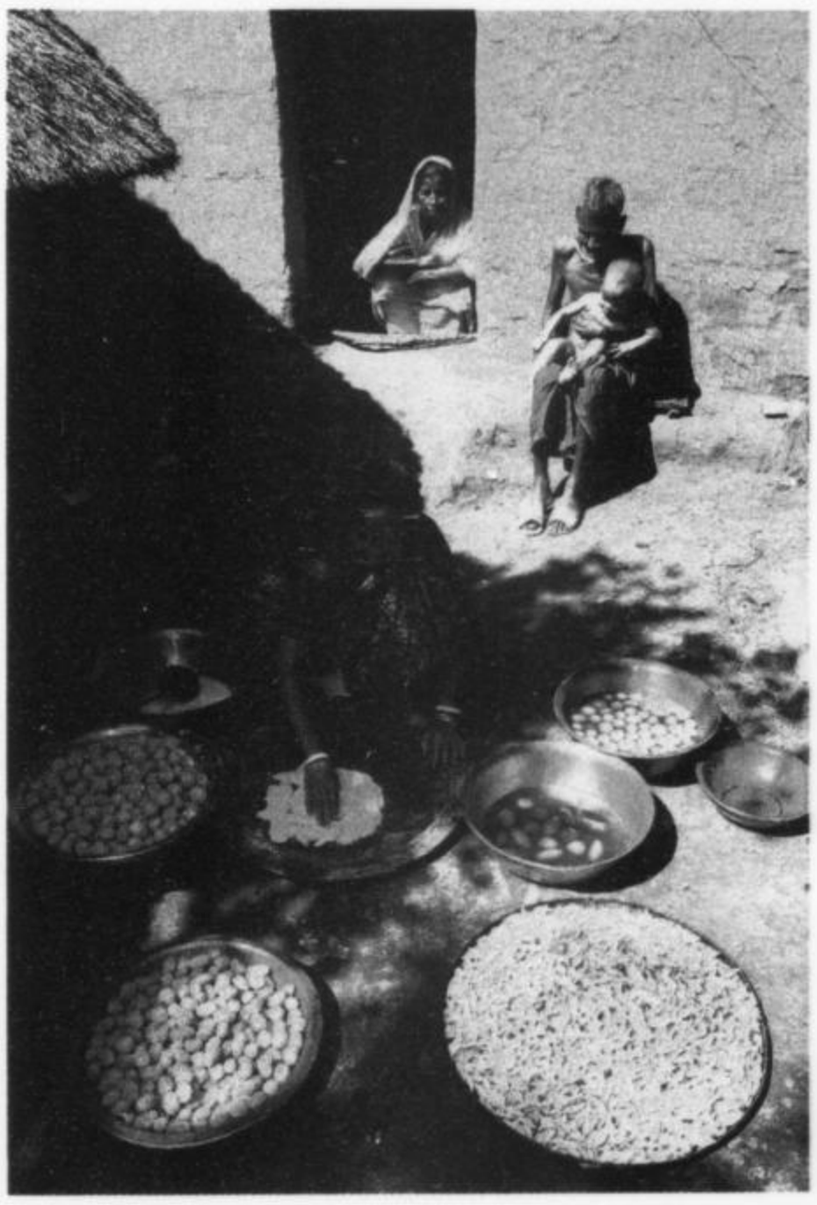
Chittagong University is in a rural area, and as soon as I left the campus I was in a village where I saw people suffering for want of very small amounts of money. I thought that if I could find such small sums for them, they could overcome their difficulties. At first I provided them with money from my own pocket.

Then I thought of putting things on a more regular footing and went to the banks, but they thought my idea was crazy. "How can you lend such small sums?" they asked, "and to the poorest people?" They gave me long lectures on banking, but I wasn't convinced. I said that the poor were the people who most needed money, and that it was to them that money should go. They wanted to give money to the rich. I told them I thought that was a strange idea.

Eventually, I offered to act as a guarantor for loans myself. I signed all the documents, took the money and gave it to the borrowers. I was responsible for collecting the repayments, and was very pleasantly surprised to find that everyone repaid their debts on time. I went back to the banks and asked them to increase the number of loans, but the bankers said no. They were convinced that the project would fail. All the same, I extended the loans, first to two villages, then to five, ten, fifteen. The result was always the same: everyone paid back what they owed on time. But still the banks refused to budge. I extended the project to the whole district, then to five districts, but I still got the same reaction from the banks. So I made up my mind to found my own bank. I asked permission from the government, but they too thought it was a crazy idea. It was only after spending two years knocking on doors that I was finally granted permission to set up the bank. That was in 1983.

■ **Today you have 12,000 employees and two million borrowers, 94 per cent of whom are women.**

— Yes, most of our clients are women. It has been a hard struggle to achieve this. Not only are the men hostile—"Why lend to her?" they ask. "She



A loan from the Grameen Bank enabled this woman to start a confectionery business (Bangladesh).

doesn't even know how to count"—but at first the women too were afraid to accept the money. They asked us to give it to their husbands. Women in our society have no self-confidence. From the moment they are born, they are told by their families: "You have brought misery on the family because you are a girl." They are so often told they are worthless, that they end up believing it.

■ **How did you persuade them to borrow from the bank?**

— It wasn't easy. But first one woman took the plunge, then another and another. When one woman succeeds, the others are encouraged. Seeing that it works, the others try their luck.

■ **What kind of projects do they want to finance?**

— Very simple projects such as raising a cow, selling milk, processing rice, weaving baskets or sewing . . . the things that women do anyway but never get paid for. Now that we give the money directly to the women, the husbands no longer take the receipts. The women do the work and are paid for it.

■ **Can a person borrow from your bank more than once, or do you stop after a first investment?**

— No, we keep lending. Suppose you borrow twenty-five dollars and pay it back within a year; you feel more confident and know you can borrow fifty dollars the next time. Once that's paid back, your ambitions grow.

■ **How many years does it take on average before your clients achieve a financially viable situation?**

— Experience shows that ten loan cycles are required before a person rises above the extreme poverty line. More than a third of our borrowers have already done this. It is very exciting to see people emerge from poverty. Our aim is to make sure that the two million families that are with us all cross the poverty line within the next five years.

■ **What kind of setbacks do you come up against?**

— Bangladesh is often hit by natural disasters. A single cyclone like the one in 1991 that killed 150,000 people can wipe everything out. Or the cow you've bought on credit falls ill and dies. The woman gets very upset. She can't do anything, but this is money that she has to pay back. She blames her luck and starts to lose confidence. Our job is to reassure her.

■ **Do you ever write off losses?**

— No, never. It's a principle with us. What we do is transfer the loan into a long-term loan and then grant a new, short-term loan.

■ **But the debt grows?**

— Yes and no. Rich people are also heavily in debt, but they make a lot of money. Being heavily in debt is not a problem provided that debt is earning money for you. There's only a problem when you are heavily in debt and not getting any income out of it. In any case, when women sign on with the Grameen Bank, there are a certain number of promises they have to make, such as neither giving nor receiving a dowry. They also promise to send their children to school, not to drink polluted water, and to plant trees.

■ **Do you ever refuse a loan if it's not for a good investment?**

— We don't get involved. We don't have to. The women asking for loans belong to groups and only propose a project to us once it has been agreed on by their group. We say, "The money is ours, but the idea is yours." We refrain from giving advice so people can become surer of themselves. It's also a way of making them more responsible. ■

A woman fishes in the Indus while her children watch.

With a loan from the Grameen Bank this Bangladeshi mother bought a rickshaw to increase her family's income.

Attiya Inayatullah

THREE WOMEN FROM PAKISTAN

Women leaders in villages of the developing world are starting to take practical steps to dismantle the barriers that keep them in inferior status. Here are portraits of three of them.

BIBI GUL

Bibi Gul is thirty-five years old. She was born and grew up in the rough tribal area of Baluchistan. When she was nine years old, her mother died, her father remarried, and she was placed in the care of her grandparents, who lived in penury. At thirteen, for a bride price that was common in the area, they assured their financial future and passed her on to a man more than twice her age.

For the next fifteen years her life was a cycle of repeated pregnancies. She had six children who survived and three miscarriages. Neither health nor education centres reached Bibi Gul's village, because of opposition from the men of the community, who, however, allowed an embroidery centre to be established to revive the dying art of traditional stitchcraft.

Bibi Gul was encouraged by the embroidery trainer, who was quick to appreciate her intelligence and learning ability, and rapidly emerged as a competent teacher herself. She not only helped to provide other girls and women with an income-generating activity but also established a forum for discussing women's issues.

In recognition of her emerging organizational abilities, Bibi Gul was invited to a leadership workshop in 1989. It was the first time that she had left her home town. She did not remove her *burqa* (the local veil) throughout the eight-day workshop although only women were present, and did not speak during the sessions. But when she returned to her community, a great change came over her.

She began to visit other women in her village and talk to them about health, immunization, education, family planning and income-generating opportunities, and encouraged them to participate in the women's programme. She was gradually made responsible for three of the villages in her area. This entailed travelling by public transport to visit other house-bound women. She slowly shed not only her fears and inhibitions but also her *burqa* when in female company. She developed into an active member of the community.

Bibi Gul had to face her husband's initial resentment of her newfound independence, and also became the object of adverse comment from the conservative community in which she lives. Nevertheless, she has worked with quiet determination, teaching her husband to care for their children when she is away on training courses and gradually earning the respect of the female community as a whole.

SHABANU

Shabanu is thirty-eight years old. She comes from a large and impoverished family in an area where education for females is regarded as unnecessary or even as a disadvantage. She dropped out of school at eleven, first to look after her brothers and sisters, then to marry a clansman. Then her husband deserted her and her four children, and she was forced to borrow from her mother and brothers to make ends meet. She resolved to overcome her dependence and ensure that neither she nor her children would ever be vulnerable again.

She started attending women's group meetings, showing particular interest in sessions devoted to education, income-generation and the status of women. Recognizing that she faced problems without formal educational qualifications, she privately prepared for and passed her matriculation examination. She also took a training course for birth attendants. She used modern, hygienic techniques that benefited the mothers she delivered. Shabanu also participated in a women's festival in which women from all over Pakistan met to share their experience, demonstrate how they were overcoming their problems and participate in rarely available recreational activities.

When she was appointed as a supervisor in the local women's programme, her income increased and she became able to educate her children. As a supervisor, she motivates other women to take action to improve their lives through education, health, hygiene, family planning and income-generating activities.

KALSOOM

From as far back as she can remember, sixteen-year-old Kalsoom has always wanted desperately to go to school. Her dream was to become a teacher. Her family objected as they faced economic problems. A maternal uncle, seeing her potential, helped her out. In 1993 Kalsoom first came in contact with the concept of human development when she was selected from her school to attend a Girl-Child Workshop, an initiative aimed at encouraging young women to value themselves and increase both the opportunities available to them and their contributions to their community. The participants were encouraged to improve their living conditions. Kalsoom's interest in helping others resulted in her selection by other participants as a local leader, and with her group she formulated a work plan for the community.

Kalsoom arranges regular meetings of local girls to explain to them the importance of personal hygiene, cleanliness, basic health care, education and the environment. She has organized a street cleaning schedule in the village and encouraged the girls to plant fruit trees and set up kitchen gardens to improve their diet and the environment. She has been trained as a home-school teacher, passing on her own limited education to those unable to pursue formal education, and she oversees two other home-schools and an adult literacy centre in her village. She is also active in seeking out and initiating income-generating opportunities suitable for girls such as tailoring and bag-making. ■

Helen Keller (1880-1968), blind and deaf author and educator, United States.

Hoda Chaaraoul (1882-1947), militant feminist, Egypt.

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Going it alone

by Christine Catarino and Laura Oso

Why are there so many women-headed households in countries of the South?

Above, a businesswoman and family head in Douala (Cameroon).

According to the usual definition, the head of a family is the person recognized as such by him- or herself and by the other members of the household. In some countries of the South a patriarchal conception of the family has discouraged women heads of household from considering themselves as such, and as a result their numbers have been underestimated.

Governments, development aid organizations and non-governmental organizations channel goods and services towards the family head, who is supposed to be the family's main source of support. This is why the social recognition of women as family heads is so important.

In addition to the accepted situations in which a woman is the mainstay of the family (widowhood, a partner's migration, single motherhood, an unstable marriage and polygamy without cohabitation), there are cases where the woman lives with a man who is not able or willing to support the household.

Matrilinear societies

In Africa women were heads of family in certain traditional matrilinear polygamous societies such as that of the Kwahu of Ghana, where women inherit through the maternal line. Other cultures in Ghana and elsewhere allow women approaching forty to "withdraw from the institution of marriage".

But the practice introduced in Africa by colonialism causing men to migrate to work in the mines and on the plantations of white farmers, followed by post-independence developments such as urbanization, increased migratory flows and changes in traditional family

structures combined to increase the number of households run by women.

A number of demographic factors are also involved, including women's longer life-expectancy and the age difference between marriage partners, which means that more women are widowed than men.

Regional variations

United Nations statistics show that in the early 1980s women-headed households constituted some 30 per cent of all households in Latin America and the Caribbean, 20 per cent of those in Africa and less than 15 per cent of those in Asia. The lowest proportions of women household heads are found in the countries of the Sahel and North Africa (due to the influence of religion, the strongly patriarchal nature of these societies and traditional forms of cohabitation) and in other Islamic countries such as Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan and Indonesia.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, low wages and unemployment due to economic recession prevent men from performing their traditional role in society. The resulting sense of failure may lead them to abandon their families. Macho attitudes, involving men in flashy expenditure designed to reinforce their prestige as males, may lead them to opt out of their responsibilities as fathers and leave the family home.

In Africa, the migration of a male spouse may impose increased responsibilities on the woman, who has to farm the family's land, while a woman who leaves home may have to provide economic support for the members of the family left behind in the village. This feminization of households is also encouraged by the form of polygamy in which the man lives with only one of his wives, while the others set up their own households. Another form of non-cohabitational polygamy exists when a male spouse migrates to the city and takes a wife there, so that he has both rural and urban households. Finally, separations and divorces reflecting a decline in customary family institutions take place because the possibility of resolving marital conflict by the community has ceased to exist.

The age factor

The chances of women becoming family heads generally increase as they grow older. The probability is low for very young women, starts to rise after the age of thirty-five and rises steeply after age sixty-five. In Africa and in Asia and the Pacific nearly half the women household heads are widows as opposed to 28 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean (36 per cent are single). More women household heads are married or single than divorced, particularly in Asia and the Pacific where the proportion of divorced women is especially low.

The possibility that a woman will become the head of a household thus fluctuates with age; she may acquire and lose this status several times in her life.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), writer, France.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), novelist, United Kingdom.

Low-paid jobs

Women family heads are liable to sexual discrimination in employment and access to

A Cameroonian notable and some of his wives.

A mother and her baby on a collective farm in Tadjikistan.

services simply because they are women. This clearly limits their resources.

Often required to combine motherhood and money-earning activity, they tend to find jobs in the informal market sector (domestic work, street vending, menial tasks that require little training) because of its flexibility. In many cases these are part-time jobs with proportionally lower wages typical of this sector and limited opportunities for improving social status. One explanation given for women's lowly position on the job market is their educational level.

In many countries women do not have the right to own land, and as the traditional authority-figures men may be given preferential treatment in access to credit, technology and social programmes.

Support networks, in many cases based on female family links, do exist and help to relieve poverty. Furthermore, a number of migrants' wives, as de facto heads of families, receive economic support from their husbands.

Choice or constraint?

Do women choose to become family heads, or are they forced into it by circumstances? In Latin America and the Caribbean there are two distinct approaches to this question. According to one, underemployment and unemployment prevent men from acting as the main family breadwinner, and as a result women do more paid work. According to the other, the growing number of woman household heads is a consequence of women's greater autonomy due to an increase in their income from paid employment. In both cases the increase in women's income boosts their role in the family. Their new-found autonomy sometimes leads them to terminate unsatisfactory marital relationships.

Other researchers believe that in Africa and Latin America, women feel a strong desire to withdraw from a social situation where macho values prevail.

Do women become household heads voluntarily or involuntarily? This raises the wider question of whether their status is a form of emancipation or the sign of a deteriorating situation. A woman's deliberate choice to be head of a household is often part of her search for an identity outside that based on the family and the conjugal unit; for a woman to accept such a role involuntarily, on the other hand, is to accept limitations on some of her aspirations. ■

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A village meeting in Lesotho. Most of the men work in South Africa, and the women keep the local economy going, although tradition requires that they recognize the authority of the village chief (right).

Patricia Made

AFRICA'S INVISIBLE WOMEN

The contribution of African women to the life of their continent is largely overlooked by the media

A member of an Eritrean TV camera crew filming in the streets of Asmara, the country's capital.

In Africa, the exclusion of women from the media mirrors their position in society at large. Between 80 and 98 per cent of them work in subsistence farming—they are the figures who can be seen in the fields across the continent, using very simple implements to till the soil. Women who have paid jobs earn from 15 to 36 per cent less than their male counterparts. Less than 9 per cent of African parliamentarians are women, and women reaching ministerial level are often shunted off into "soft" ministries such as health, social welfare, education and women's affairs. Despite the education drives of the 1960s and 1970s, 56 per cent of African women remain illiterate. Women are excluded from power in all sectors of society.

The media help to perpetuate this situation by gender stereotyping and negative portrayal of women. The African media principally serve an urban elite. Many of the items they publish are chosen for their entertainment value, rather than for their value as information that could empower the majority of the people. Prominence and topicality are the main criteria of newsworthiness. The people who appear on the front pages are the people who occupy positions of power. Most African women do not fall into this category.

African women are often depicted in the media as victims or sex objects. They make the headlines when they are "battered" by their husbands or commit bizarre or sensational acts. In one African country it was noted that when the media did admit the existence of gender gaps in education and employment, editorialists insisted that women themselves are to blame because they do not take sufficient advantage of the available opportunities.

Nor do journalists (both men and women) view women as a target audience for the information they write and produce for the media. Since the majority of women are illiterate and live in rural areas, they are generally disregarded as a media constituency.

The situation cannot be improved without an increase in the numbers of African women actively involved in the media, including in management and training. As long as women remain without the power to influence the flow of information and the type of coverage given to events, it will be extremely difficult to persuade the media to present a less negative image of them.

A high drop-out rate

The dominant forces in the media, however, tend to resist any move towards change. Women who are appointed to editorial boards or programming positions often lack professional experience and are usually isolated in a male-dominated environment where it is difficult for them to be genuinely effective. Women who achieve influential positions in the media are regularly subjected to harsh critical scrutiny by male colleagues and other women. Some studies show that there is a high drop-out rate among women who do reach senior management positions. Women who are tied to a home environment lack the flexibility and mobility essential to the successful journalist; and women journalists have a reputation for loose morals simply because they work long hours, often in close collaboration with men. Because of such pressures, the numbers of women entering the media are actually falling in some parts of Africa.

In any case, the appointment of women to senior editorial positions does not in itself provide any guarantee against gender bias in news reporting. The strictures of "producing good copy" are such that even women editors will often regard women as newsworthy only when they do something sensational or bizarre.

Twenty years ago, at the Mexico City World Conference on Women[1], the media were seen as a catalyst for change. Since then, however, little has changed, especially in Africa. ■

1. See the *Unesco Courier*, August-September 1975.

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Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952), diplomat, Russia.

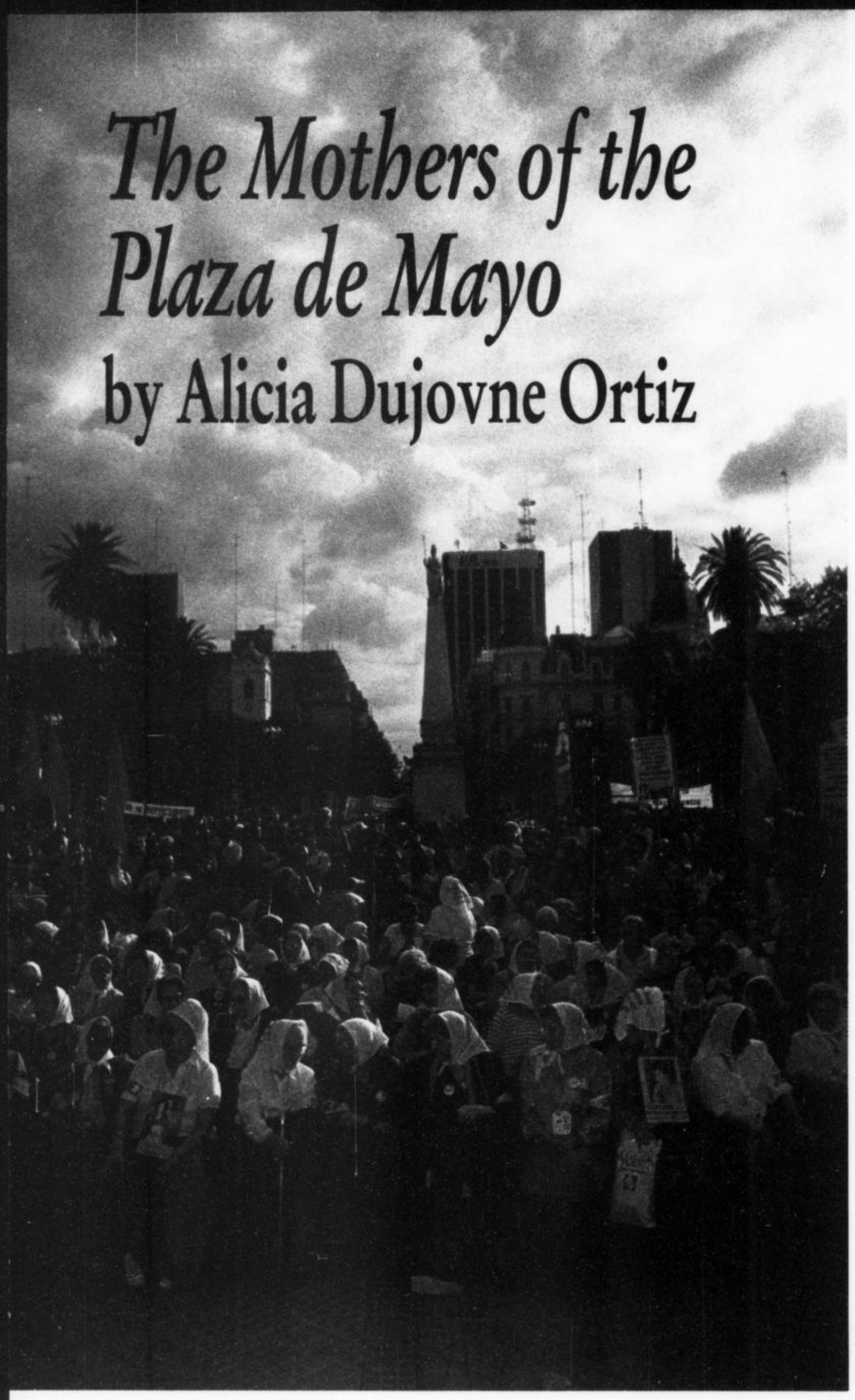
Martha Argerich (1941-), concert pianist, Argentina.

This Malian woman, a judge, is a campaigner against the traditional practice of genital mutilation of young girls.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

by Alicia Dujovne Ortiz

For almost twenty years the mothers of those who disappeared during the Argentine military dictatorship have been fighting for justice



Above, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo demonstrate in May 1995.

Attached to the picket signs are photos of young faces with a 1970s look. The girls have long hair parted down the middle. The boys' expressions and hair styles could belong to no other decade. Each picket is carried by an elderly woman wearing a headscarf. The women are the mothers of *desaparecidos*, young Argentines who disappeared during the dictatorship in the late 1970s. Every Thursday since April 1977 they have marched around the Plaza de Mayo, the historic square in Buenos Aires on which stands Government House, commonly called the Casa Rosada. They will continue to do so until the end of their days. They know that there is no hope, but still they refuse to accept that their children are dead. They are not seeking compensation. They are making a protest that is absolute and unending. It is almost as if their grief is keeping them alive.

This indomitable movement began on the day in 1977 when fourteen mothers of young *desaparecidos* met in the Plaza de Mayo to hand a petition to the then President of Argentina, General Jorge Rafael Videla. They wanted to know what had happened to their children, who had been kidnapped by mysterious armed commandos. A year before, the army had overthrown Isabel Perón. A government minister, López Rega, had created the "Triple A", paramilitary forces that were schooled in torture. The officers who established the dictatorship took over this organization from López Rega and, so to speak, improved it.

The torturers of the infamous Naval Mechanics School had a weakness for young pregnant women. Babies born in prison were often given or sold to military families. The perpetrators of these grim practices entered an area of darkness from which there was no return. By refusing to forgive them today, the Mothers are quite aware of what they are doing. Human errors can be pardoned; what is beyond the frontiers of humanity cannot.

By confronting Videla and demonstrating in front of the Casa Rosada, the women also crossed a point of no-return, but in the other direction. Their experience of horror gave them superhuman courage. What did death-threats matter to them? They knew very well—and the memory of their disemboweled daughters reminded them of it at every moment—that to be a woman was no protection. In fact, some of them would pay for their courage with their lives. Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti, for example, the instigator of the movement, was arrested and never seen again. In the intervals between beating them up and setting police dogs on

ALICIA DUJOVNE ORTIZ, of Argentina, has written a number of novels and children's books. The French version of her biography of Eva Peron has recently been published by Grasset, Paris.

them, the soldiers ridiculed the women and said they were "mad". How could they guess that these "madwomen" would still be going round the square eighteen years later?

"We do not go round in circles," says Hebe Bonafini, the movement's guiding spirit. "We march." It was the police who unwittingly gave them the idea of walking round the pyramid on the Plaza de Mayo. The Mothers had grown used to meeting at the same place in the square until one day the police ordered them to "move on". The Mothers took the order literally and have never stopped "moving" since. They also showed their sense of humour whenever a policeman demanded to see a woman's papers. On these occasions, 300 women would step forward, and the man would have to give up. If it looked as if one woman was going to be arrested, the others would demand to go with her. Once in prison, they would start to pray, or rather yell out prayers calling on God to vent his wrath on their persecutors.

Yes to life

Hebe Bonafini explains why the women march in circles. "How else should the Mothers march?" she asks "than round—like their bellies and the world through which their protest echoes." Since the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were awarded the Sakharov Prize their example has been followed by mothers in many other countries: by Sicilian mothers fighting against the Mafia, by Spanish mothers fighting against drugs, by Ukrainian victims of Chernobyl, and by Palestinian, Israeli and Yugoslav mothers who reject war. All these women reconstitute the symbolic circle of the cycle of life as opposed to the straight lines of military parades.

The Mothers have resisted all kinds of blandishments and lies. These housewives, many from poor families, might have been thought naive whereas in fact they have a fierce intelligence. When timid or conniving politicians made vague

Left and below, a demonstration in September 1983.

Ding Ling (1902-1986), feminist writer, China.

Philippine (Pina) Bausch (1940-), dancer and choreographer, Germany.

promises to look for their children, they saw the reality of the concentration camps where those children had been tortured. They were under no illusions. During the dictatorship, in 1979, they saw immediately that a visit by representatives of the OAS (Organization of American States) would not only be fruitless but would actually make the situation worse. During the Falklands War they were among the first to realize that the military were playing on patriotic fervour to dupe the people, just as they had by staging the World Soccer Cup in Argentina in 1978.

After the fall of the junta, they understood that they could expect nothing concrete from President Raúl Alfonsín. Today, when a wave of public confessions by the torturers, begun by Captain Scilingo, is being continued by officers who admit to the crimes committed under the dictatorship, the Mothers know they should not be satisfied with a list of the *desaparecidos* nor conclude that they are all dead.

"We know that there were thirty thousand of them," says one of the women, "and we know all their names. Every mother knows who arrested her child. What we want is a list of the murderers and executioners and life imprisonment for those who are still free. The government is hiding the truth from us. We don't really want to know whether they died under torture or were drowned with a stone tied to their feet. Our children now live within us. It is they who have brought us into the world; they have become our fathers and mothers. If we want to know what happened to our children, it is only to punish their killers."

"Our children now live within us. It is they who have brought us into the world."

The refusal to forgive has become an acceptance of life. These women, changed by suffering into artists and poets, have invented an expression that is absurdly and terribly beautiful, "Living apparitions". They do not want piles of bones and lists of bodies. They want justice. They know by heart all the legal arguments and know, for example, that while murder may be subject to prescription, illegal detention is a permanent violation of human rights and is imprescriptible. Accepting that their children are dead would be tantamount to accepting *el Punto Final* (the Full Stop), the name of the amnesty law voted under the Alfonsín presidency. Calling off their protest would mean that death had won.

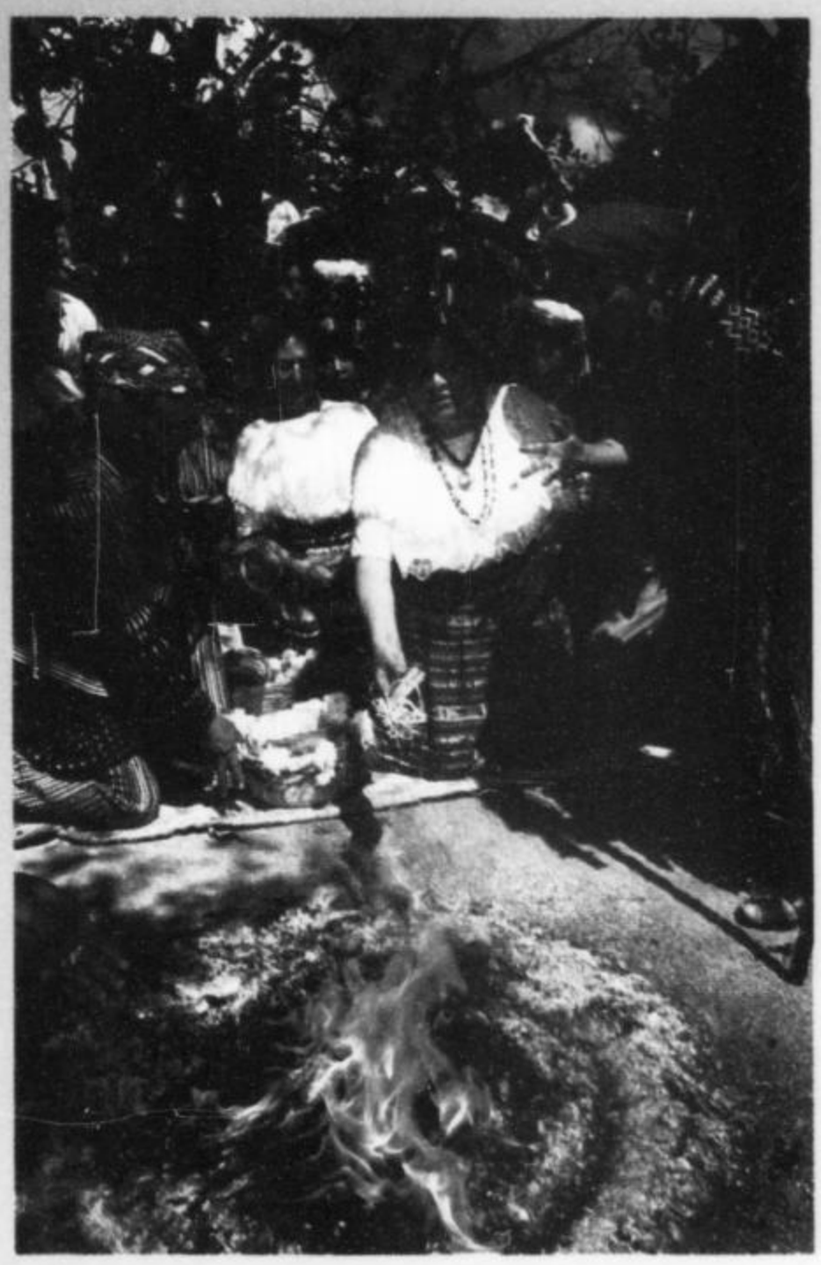
The women live with an intensity and a detachment that are impossible for others to imagine because shared suffering has welded them into a group. Initially they wore baby clothes on their heads to help them to recognize each other. These wounded lionesses have gone far beyond individual suffering. Once each mother marched with the photo of her own child. Now they carry any picket sign, irrespective of the photo on it. They are universal mothers.

When Scilingo revealed that priests were taken along on the navy planes from which naked and drugged prisoners were dropped into the Rio de la Plata, the Mothers marched to the cathedral and chanted an extraordinary but profoundly religious litany. While one of them recited the list of the bishops and priests who had collaborated with the dictatorship—everyone knows who they are—they responded in chorus after each name, "Lord, do not forgive them, for they acted in Thy name!"

Other Mothers have taken a new path but with the same goal of serving the forces of life. In fact these Mothers are Grandmothers who have sworn to trace their grandchildren who were given to military families. Of 500 children who disappeared in this way, they have already found about fifty. Their leader, Estella Barnes de Carlotto, explains that only 200 families have formally asked for a search to be made. The others are afraid. But the Grandmothers possess an extremely powerful weapon in the National Bank of Genetic Fingerprinting, where Ana María Di Leonardo has recorded the genetic identity of 170 family groups with a child or newborn baby who disappeared. The genetic chain is another woman's weapon, another endless circle. ■

Rigoberta Menchú

'WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY...'



Rigoberta Menchú (centre) takes part in a traditional Indian celebration in Guatemala, October 1992.

Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan Indian, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1992. A United Nations goodwill ambassador for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, she has become the spokeswoman for the indigenous peoples of Latin America and elsewhere.

I am self-taught. When I was twenty I had the opportunity to learn another language and discover a different world from that of my own Maya culture. At the same time, unfortunately, I also had to leave my home and my land, and see my parents, my brothers and many of my friends die. Since then I've kept on learning, sometimes painfully, far from my family and my community, in a foreign language and an unknown world

A collective memory

It is important to me that my personal experience should fit into a collective context that belongs to all peoples, but primarily to the Guatemalan people. I lived through the most violent period in the history of Guatemala, which had a profound influence on the culture of the country's indigenous people and the society at large. Everything I have been through—flight, exile, homesickness—has been experienced by many Guatemalans.

One of the most important things I've learned is that one must remain humble before knowledge. I'm still a student, a student of time, of life, and I hope to keep on learning until my dying breath. People should constantly renew themselves, their ideas and their feelings. I have been awarded the Nobel Prize, and honorary doctorates at several universities, but I am still intimidated when a journalist asks me questions. Every question teaches me something.

I am very religious; I believe in life. But I have my own own way of believing, and if I were asked to explain what the heart of the sky or mother earth mean to me, the short term and the long term and even life itself, people would probably not understand anything about my gods. I only know that if I didn't believe in something, I would cease to exist.

My father died fifteen years ago, on 31 January 1980. My mother died three months later. It was a tragic period for Guatemala, a devastated land. Many of my compatriots were forced into exile. I remember living for maybe a year and a half in very difficult circumstances, terrified and traumatized by the war, with no experience or prospects, knowing nothing of the world or what I should do.

Since those dark years we have come a long way in joy and enthusiasm, fighting alongside the peasants for their rights. In fifteen years we've made considerable progress. A growing number of my indigenous brother Guatemalans are, for example, not only going into politics, economics and local government but also into cultural and artistic activities. Many are famous artists, and a lot of young people are embarking on scientific careers without sacrificing their identity. Pride in their identity is what makes a people great.

The all too familiar image of indigenous people as museum pieces is the result of ignorance and the lack of information and education that are typical of the late twentieth century. It is unfair to claim that indigenous people have made no contribution to world culture. It always amuses me to read ecologists' manifestoes in defence of the environment, nature and respect for life because they are simply rehashed versions of our own beliefs. Indigenous peoples also have their own approaches to science and medicine, and they have something to contribute to ways of thinking and living.

Our Maya people have a rich, multifarious culture which they have succeeded in keeping alive. It is a profoundly collective culture which tries to strike a balance between the rights of the individual and the interests of the community, and has succeeded in surviving poverty, famine, suffering and war. For us, progress is meaningless unless it is shared by everyone. Every step forward evolves from a collective rationale, and nothing is gained by the action of an isolated individual. In this respect our culture is sometimes at odds with the rampant materialism and individualism that you sometimes see in Western culture.

But we also have a lot of values in common at a time when rich and poor peoples alike are united in the fight for survival, cultural as well as physical. We have all joined forces to preserve the highest human values. And as far as that is concerned I see no difference between indigenous people and the rest, between men and women, between Latin Americans and Europeans.

Grounds for optimism

We have also made a lot of progress internationally. Ten years ago no one cared about indigenous people, but today we are welcomed in Unesco and other international bodies. The world is beginning to recognize and value indigenous people's way of thinking. We have come a long way, and that is why I am profoundly optimistic. Not only can we walk through the corridors of the United Nations without being taken for a folk attraction, but people now listen to what we have to say.

Our goals are ambitious, and it will be a long job. What we are looking for is a solution to the conflict that is tearing my country apart so that we can build a multilingual and multicultural nation for all Guatemalans. But the international community still has a long way to go if it wants to help us. Governments still misleadingly talk about indigenous "populations" rather than "peoples". It hardly needs saying that at present the rights and personalities of these peoples are not recognized as they should be, but here too, I think that it is primarily a question of education and information. ■

Somalia: the great escape

by Hassan Keynan

With their society in turmoil, Somali women are breaking free from the constraints of a patriarchal system

In Somali society, male-female roles and power relationships are regulated by traditional beliefs and practices which do not admit equality between the sexes. Somali "culture" allows and equips men to dominate women, who are systematically relegated to a subordinate, marginal existence.

The roots of these inequities lie in a patriarchal tradition which confines women to housekeeping and procreation, excludes them from positions of power and influence and denies them access to resources and means of making an independent living. This tradition imposes severe restrictions on women's intellectual and social development, and stifles their creative skills and energy. It also discourages them from openly expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Somali culture has established elaborate myths, folk literature and traditional discourse to rationalize and sanctify patriarchy. It is in oral literature that men's campaign against women begins. Enormously popular folktales portray women as inherently incapable of being rational rulers and decent wives. Proverbs convey the message that womanhood/motherhood is incompatible with intelligence and wisdom. "A breast that contains milk cannot contain wisdom," says a well-known proverb. Poetry, a national institution of great power and influence, portrays women as incapable of rhyming one word with another and therefore as unworthy of having a meaningful voice. The ideal woman is the silent woman whose words and ideas are limited to her immediate circle of children and other women.

Civil war and famine

But disasters can sometimes generate unexpected opportunities. The human tragedy that has devastated Somalia has also started to usher Somali society down the road to change. More

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important, this nascent social metamorphosis is most evident in male-female relations.

A number of factors have combined to trigger the process of change. First, the protracted civil war and famine have removed many men from the family arena and placed additional burdens on women. Female-headed households have proliferated as a result.

Second, over one million persons, one-fifth of the total population, have been forced to flee their country in search of security and sustenance. Most of them ended up in refugee camps in neighbouring countries: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen, but many sought asylum in the Western world, mainly in Canada, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Germany. The majority of these refugee/migrants are women and children, and this has led to women's playing a growing and more visible role.

Third, there are indications that Somali women have shown greater resilience and resourcefulness than men in coping with the trauma of civil war and famine at home and the anxieties and uncertainties of refugee life abroad.

Fourth, new possibilities seem to have opened up for women refugees, especially where the country of asylum provides adequate economic support, protection from gender-based inequities and understanding and tolerance toward migrants.

Role reversals

The seemingly eternal order of patriarchy has been unceremoniously confronted with the reality of change, and this has caused profound reversals in gender roles and power relations.

The new status of women expresses itself in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most prominent is the exhilarating sense of freedom that women feel and enjoy. The lifting of the oppressive and dehumanizing burden of patriarchal dogma is seen by many women as a wondrous intervention designed to celebrate their humanity, dignity and talent. Many Somali women glow with inspiration and exuberance and talk about their newfound freedom with poetic eloquence. "I feel I have undergone a miraculous process of recreation and renewal," says one woman now living in Norway. "I am a new person, blessed with a full and fulfilling life. It's magic."

For many Somali women the arrival of freedom was accompanied by another symbol of empowerment. They have found a voice. Women have begun to demand and defend their rights, both privately and in public. They have become more assertive in two traditionally male-dominated areas. Men can no longer run the affairs of the family at will, nor can they contemplate taking a second or a third wife on a whim and with impunity. The patriarchal discourse is slowly being demystified.

A significant number of these women have become increasingly active in economic life, an area previously inaccessible to them. Finding employment can be enormously difficult for refugees and migrants, but many Somali women have managed to find work while their husbands have remained largely unemployed. Most of these women work in areas like child care, health, food-processing, catering and cleaning. Many have also established small family businesses that deal mainly with women's and children's clothes, jewelry, cosmetics and special types of incense widely used by Somali women. The result is that many households now have women, not men, as breadwinners and heads of family.

The change has also drastically transformed the allocation of tasks and responsibilities in the domestic arena. The traditional norms and ethos that excused men from household chores and placed all the burden on women are no longer acceptable to females. There is now a new order that sees household chores and related duties as evenly divided between males and females. Tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing and child care now form part of men's daily responsibilities, a development inconceivable in traditional Somali culture.

Men's apprehensions

Most men feel a profound sense of discomfort and apprehension. Many believe that the changes taking place in gender relations are too radical and too destabilizing. They view the growing empowerment of women as a serious threat to their authority and dignity and, by extension, as a threat to the moral and cultural norms and traditions of Somali society. They complain about humiliation and lack of respect, marginalization and expulsion, orders being given by their wives, loss of family coherence and values, and confusion and disorientation in the way children are brought up. Many men admit that they are no longer able to cope with these pressures and humiliations. It is reported that some are sinking into depression and have started drinking heavily. ■

Opposite page: refugees in Bardera camp (Somalia), wait for a children's reception centre to open.
Below: a young Somali woman (foreground) working for a mail-order company in London (United Kingdom).

Marguerite Yourcenar (1903-1987), novelist, France.

Maria Callas (1923-1977), singer, Greece/United States.

Norwegian politics bridges the gender gap

by Hege Skjeie

Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (centre) at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), June 1992.

A country where women are integrated into party politics at national level

On 9 May 1986 a social democratic government was formed in Norway. Its composition set a world record: eight of the eighteen-member cabinet appointed by the new Prime Minister, Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, were women. Since then, no Norwegian cabinet has contained less than 40 per cent women, and the representation of women in parliament has gradually reached approximately the same level. In recent elections Norwegian voters were presented with three different alternative governments; all three candidates for Prime Minister were women.

To outsiders this development may seem somewhat mysterious—even insiders have referred to it as "a political miracle", although it is a miracle which is still largely confined to the world of party politics. In large economic organizations, the state bureaucracy and academic institutions, the proportion of women in positions of power remains low. And private sector corporations are almost exclusively run by men.

Feminist influence

Women's successful integration in Norwegian politics is largely due to the influence the Norwegian feminist movement has come to wield in the political parties. Unlike its counterparts in many other countries, the Norwegian feminist movement advocated integration into the existing political structure as a viable strategy for empowering women. Right from the start, the movement co-operated with women inside the party structure in making demands for political representation. This co-operation was expressed to a notable extent in local and national election campaigns. In the 1971 local elections, it helped to produce a majority of women on the city council of the Norwegian capital, Oslo.

Women should represent women

From the 1970s on, two lines of argument were advanced by women activists. Some women maintained that the conflicting interests of men and women required a balanced representation of both parties. Others, in line with more conservative political ideologies, argued that women's experience could make a valuable contribution to the decision-making process. Both sides agreed, however, that representation of women by women was necessary. Men could not negotiate the values or the interests of women.

These arguments fitted in with a strong tradition of social representation in Norwegian politics. While it is true that the Norwegian parliament recruits its members disproportionately from social elites, it does so less than many other national legislatures. The parties control the nomination of candidates to almost all important political appointments, and one issue on which they compete for votes is that of their own profile. Most party leaderships have tended to believe that voters will take note of the representativeness of party lists with regard to occupational background, region and age. Arguments about the political relevance of gender thus struck a familiar note.

Gender, however, was not merely regarded as one more "relevant background criterion". Once women managed to gain access to various party leaderships, gender achieved a prominence that forced most political parties to adopt a set of formal regulations governing their composition. The system of gender quotas, which is at present practised by four of the six major Norwegian parties, comes near to guaranteeing equal participation rights. The quota regulations state that both sexes are to be represented by a minimum of 40 per cent and apply both to the composition of party election lists and to appointments within the national party organizations.

'A political rhetoric of difference'

While men and women alike maintain that party politics has now become a place for the negotia-

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tion of the different interests of men and women politicians and that such differences are relevant to political decision-making, some feminists contend that this "old" way of arguing for women's political participation, even when proved successful, still smacks of continuing male political domination. The obvious, self-evident right to participate in politics, these feminists argue, is still a male prerogative, and women have to *justify* their presence on the political scene. Even if they are present in nearly equal numbers, they still have to prove themselves.

This overlooks some simple political facts. Firstly, providing justification or reasons for political participation is something that is demanded of all political leaders. Justification is a general aspect of representative politics. Secondly, new political movements commonly present themselves as "an alternative". It is true that men have never defended their positions with explicit reference to gender. Only women's participation in politics has been argued in these terms. But women political leaders *are* relative newcomers to the political community. By presenting themselves in terms of the alternative, women are merely using a well-known political stratagy.

The divisions between "masculine" and "feminine" have long contributed to the legitimization of practices which kept women out of political life. In Norway today, they legitimize instead practices which secure the presence of women *in* political life. ■

Vigdis Finnbogadóttir (1930-), Europe's first woman head of state elected by universal suffrage, Iceland.

Corazón Aquino (1933-), Asia's first woman head of state elected by universal suffrage, Philippines.

Ugné Karvelis

LITHUANIA: THE FIRST STATUTE FOR WOMEN

The Statute of Lithuania, promulgated in 1529, was the first law in Europe to define the rights of women as human beings and not simply as mothers or potential mothers.

The status of women in Lithuanian customary law was the result of a synthesis between a strong matrilinear tradition and the role played by women in a society where men were absent for long periods fighting in the wars.

Whereas collective family responsibility was the rule everywhere else in Europe, the Statute of Lithuania established the principle of individual legal responsibility and the equality of everyone in the eyes of the law—irrespective of religion or social status—and guaranteed the inviolability of the person and his or her property. It stipulated extremely severe penalties, as was the rule at that time, when corporal punishment was traditionally accompanied by fines. The Statute regarded a woman's life and physical integrity as worth double those of a man of the same rank, although it is true that the life of a woman "slave" (only prisoners-of-war were considered as such) was worth a little less than two geese, i.e. the same price as that of a male "slave".

A Second Statute, promulgated in 1566, went even further than its predecessor, doubling the terms of imprisonment imposed for offences against the wife, widow or daughter of a nobleman.

At a time when women in other European countries were generally kept under the guardianship of their fathers or husbands, the Statute (a third and final version of which was promulgated in 1588) even recognized that Lithuanian women had the right to choose their partners freely. On the other hand, parents had the right to disinherit a daughter who married without their consent.

The rights of young women to own property were spelled out in meticulous detail, although they remained limited. If a father died without having fixed the amount of his daughters' dowries, the daughters automatically shared out one quarter of his property among themselves. When a marriage took place, the bridegroom had to "endow" his bride with full title to a part of his property.

Widows received even better treatment. They had the legal right to administer their dead husband's lands, to freely dispose of their personal property and to bring lawsuits. Ladies, like lords, were obliged to finance the service of armed horsemen in the grand duke's army, although they were not required to take part in military expeditions personally.

The question of rape was handled in the same spirit and in a way that even today may seem remarkably favourable to women. By simply lodging a complaint, the victim could haul the aggressor before the courts and "prove the facts through the testimony of witnesses". These witnesses could be female, since the Statute stipulated that women had the same right as men to appear in court and to take the oath. A rapist could be punished by the death penalty, irrespective of his social rank, and escape the executioner only if his victim agreed to marry him.

Lithuanian women did not, however, enjoy equality with men in every sphere. They had no access to political life. By the middle of the sixteenth century, many voices were being raised in protest against the granting of "men's" rights to women. ■

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of Lithuania, is her country's permanent delegate to UNESCO. An author, translator and literary critic, she has for several years produced a programme about world literature for French radio.

Young Lithuanians dance at a midsummer festival early this century.

Men supporting women

by Michael S. Kimmel

The feminist movement has always counted men among its supporters

A househusband hangs out the washing.

Most men have regarded the women's movement with bemused indifference. Some have actively opposed women's rights, as if women's freedom would diminish men's freedom. In a few countries there has been a men's movement to encourage men to run off to the woods to "bond" with other men, as if to escape the effects of feminism.

But some men support feminism, in the belief that equal opportunity is a right, not a privilege. Pro-feminist men believe that the changes feminism has brought to women's lives are positive for men as well as for women. Some of them support feminism because their moral commitments or political ideologies are based on the right of the individual to determine his or her life, or because of a commitment to a principle of equality that demands that all people enjoy the same rights as citizens. Others support feminism because they are the sons of feminist women, the brothers of feminist sisters, the fathers of feminist daughters, the husbands of feminist wives, or the friends of feminist women.

From the time of the earliest feminist movement in the nineteenth century until the present, however, the most common reason why men have supported feminism is because they believe it is the right thing to do, because women are equal individuals with rights that cannot be abridged. As the great nineteenth-century American abolitionist Frederick Douglass put it, male support of feminism is a matter of "conscience and common sense".

Some men have also supported feminism on the grounds that women are socially and morally superior to men. These men believe that women can redeem men from the "muddle we have made of politics", as one social reformer put it at the turn of the century, and "will correct many of these law-made wrongs that man has made".

Finally, some men have supported feminism because they believed that it would benefit men by demolishing conventional standards of morality and allowing men to fully develop themselves. As Frederick Douglass put it: "This cause is not altogether and exclusively woman's cause. It is the cause of human brotherhood as well as human sisterhood, and both must rise and fall together. Woman cannot be elevated without elevating man, and man cannot be depressed without depressing woman also". Or, as one social reformer put it at the beginning of this century, "Feminism will make it possible for the first time for men to be free."

A battle cry for freedom

Wherever feminist women have agitated for reform, there have been men to support them. Educational pioneers opened the doors of colleges and universities to women in the nineteenth century, and supported women's entry into professions historically closed to women. The founder of Wellesley College in the United States wrote that he supported women's education as a form of "revolt": "We revolt against the slavery in which women are held by the customs of society—the broken health, the aimless lives, the subordinate position, the helpless dependence, the dishonesties and shams of so-called education. The Higher Education of Women is one of the world's battle cries for freedom; for rights against might. It is the cry of the oppressed slave."

On the economic front, pro-feminist men supported women's rights to work, to own property, to join unions, to enter the professions, to receive equal wages for equal work, and to be free of harassment on the job.

Politically, pro-feminist men were preoccupied with the struggle for suffrage. Since that was granted to women in the first decades of this century, they have supported women candidates for public office and have worked to eliminate barriers to women's full political participation.

Socially, pro-feminist men have been active in campaigns for birth control, the right to divorce, and the right of a woman to keep her own name. In addition, men have supported women's efforts

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to end sexual harassment, domestic violence, spouse abuse and the ritual torture and genital mutilation of which women in certain societies are victims. Around the world there are men who oppose female circumcision, dowry death, and customs which give men the power of life and death over their wives and daughters.

Many pro-feminist men also feel a need to support each other as they travel the painful, often confusing path of challenging and changing the assumptions about gender which they have been taught. All over the world, there are support groups for men who seek to be more active and engaged fathers and in many countries men are involved in efforts to end violence against women.

In the United States, the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) was founded in 1982 to support "the continuing struggle of women for full equality" and to promote a vision of men and women working together "as allies to change the injustices that have so often made them see one another as enemies."

NOMAS stands for four co-equal principles: (1) to oppose sexism and support women's full equality in the public and private sphere; (2) to oppose heterosexism and homophobia, and to support full equality for gay men and lesbians; (3) to support the struggle of minorities for full equality; and, (4) to oppose rigid definitions of masculinity and promote changes among men that will enable them to live richer and more fully expressive emotional lives. ■

Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), painter, Mexico.

Valentina Tereshkova (1937-), cosmonaut, Russia.

Catherine Vidal

ARE MEN AND WOMEN ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH?

A scientist answers an awkward question

Does a man's brain differ from a woman's? Yes, say the biologists, in the sense that no one has exactly the same brain. No, say the philosophers, sociologists, historians and other representatives of the human sciences. The important thing is to distinguish between the functioning of the brain as an organ, which is studied by biologists, and the functioning of the human mind, which is the bedrock of civilization.

The question needs to be clarified both scientifically and ideologically. Scientific analysis of the brain can only be carried out in certain limited conditions, which cannot do justice to the extreme complexity of cerebral activity. If, for example, exploration of the brain's mechanisms for handling language is especially important for clinical medicine, it must be emphasized that even the most exhaustive "physical" description of language is not enough to explain language as a vehicle of thought. Our knowledge of the human mind and its relationships with individual and collective history is the result of investigations in a number of fields such as philosophy, psychoanalysis and history. All these disciplines attest that men and women share equally the faculties of intelligence, emotion and imagination.

This explains why scientific observation of a difference between the sexes in the functioning of the brain should not be taken to reflect a difference in thinking capacity, nor justify any kind of prejudice regarding the respective competence of men and women or inequalities between the sexes in the socio-cultural distribution of tasks.

The brain, like other physical organs, is influenced by genetic, hormonal and environmental factors. The male (testosterone) and female (oestradiol) sexual hormones are secreted very early on in the foetus, permitting the development of the genitalia and of the secondary sexual characteristics that permanently take form at puberty. Sexual hormones also influence the construction and functioning of the brain, where differences between male and female sexual behaviour originate.

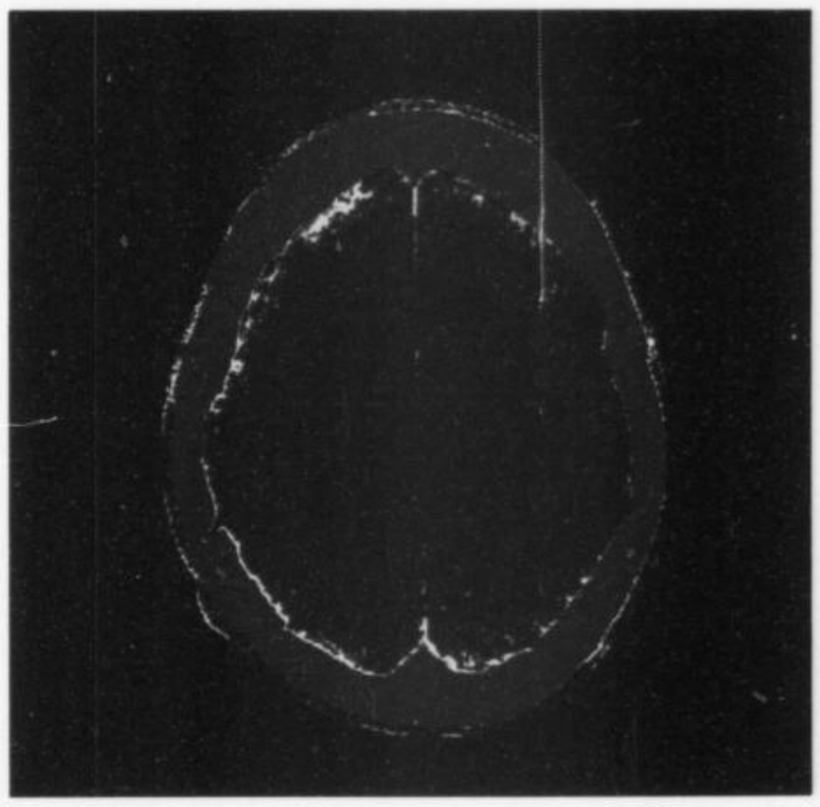
And so it is not surprising that anatomists should have observed slight variations in size between certain areas of the brains of men and women. Brain size has nothing to do with mental capacities, as brain autopsies of great and lesser thinkers have shown. The inner environment (hormones and diet) and the outer environment (family and social interactions, relationships with one's surroundings) are ultimately the factors that influence the precise set-up of the millions of neuron networks that make up the human brain.

Throughout pre- and post-natal development the diversity of people's experiences results in microscopic anatomical variations between their brains. One might expect to find fewer differences between the brains of men and women who have been raised in similar contexts than those between two individuals of the same sex who have had very different experiences.

Spectacular technical progress in the last few years has made it possible for us to study the *living* brain. By means of new brain-scanning techniques such as positron emission tomography and nuclear magnetic resonance, it is possible to scan the living brain rapidly and painlessly and to draw up detailed anatomical maps of cerebral activity.

Analysis of brain scans of men and women reveals individual variations that are statistically insignificant. The only notable difference between men and women observed so far concerns the identification of word rhymes.

In the last analysis, while every man and woman uses his or her own set of neuron networks, the important thing is that our brains enable us to see the world around us and act upon it with the skills that are unique to each individual and each sex. This is the basis of the infinite diversity of thinking that constitutes the wealth of human civilizations. ■



False-colour scanner image of a normal human brain in cross-section.

CATHERINE VIDAL,
of France, is a neurobiologist at the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

The women builders of Cameroon

In many traditional rural societies of black Africa, building is a collective activity in which all members of the community take part—men, women and children.

In some parts of Cameroon, building has traditionally been a woman's job. The women builders know exactly what can and what can't be done with the locally available building materials and use skills that have been handed down from generation to generation.

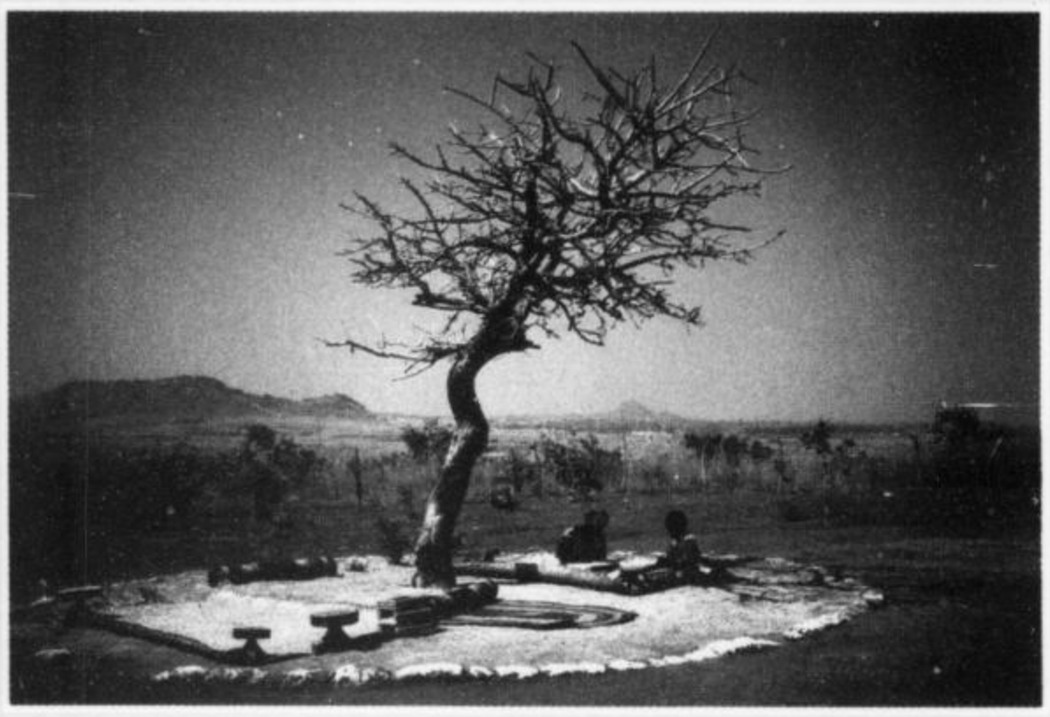
Today this tradition is dying out. The requirements of rapid urban development and the use of imported materials are pushing women out of the building market.

However, international aid agencies and the people of Cameroon themselves are starting to realize that skilled women builders can make a big contribution to their country's development.

It is time for practical steps to be taken to safeguard the know-how of these women, to integrate them as partners in rural and urban development and to set up training centres where their technical knowledge and skills can be adapted to contemporary building conditions and taught to younger generations.

HAMAN MOHAMAN
Cameroonian architect and town planner

Kotoko women builders of northern Cameroon renovate a cob-walled dwelling and teach their skills to young apprentices.



Studying the Qur'an in a training area beneath a fig tree, symbol of life and discussion.

Dwellings constructed by Doudou, a well-known woman builder, in Ngaoundéré (Cameroon).

■ Why is the Beijing Conference being held?

— It is the fourth in a series of major international conferences on women, the first of which took place just twenty years ago in Mexico City during International Women's Year. Thirty-six thousand women are expected to participate in the Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations that will be held from 30 August to 8 September, and from five to ten thousand people will attend the official conference from 4 to 15 September.

The Conference is a sign that "women's issues" are gradually ceasing to be seen in isolation and are coming to be regarded as of concern to the whole of society, with their dimensions of justice, human rights and human resource development. They are issues of concern to men as well as women.

If the questions that have been raised at meetings of UNESCO's Consultative Committee on Women are anything to go by the delegates will have plenty to do. Those questions have focused on issues relating to tolerance, respect for individual rights, freedom of opinion and expression, and the fight against illiteracy and poverty. These are all matters that call for radical change, and we hope that the Conference will be an opportunity to take a step in that direction.

■ What progress has been made in the last twenty years?

— In many parts of the world there have been reductions in infant and maternal mortality, improvements in nutrition and hygiene, increasing life expectancy, increased school enrolments and female rates of adult literacy, but the fact is that these social gains are unequally shared. The gap between the rich and poor is widening, both between and within countries. Wide gender-disparities prevail, more and more of the world's poor are female, and discrimination and violence against women continue.

The situation of the majority of the world's women therefore seems to be deteriorating, especially in the least developed countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, they bear the brunt of cuts in social welfare policies

THE ROAD TO BEIJING

THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Ingeborg Breines, Special Adviser on Women, Gender and Development to the Director General of UNESCO, talks to the *UNESCO Courier*.

induced by structural adjustment programmes. Around half a million women still die each year from pregnancy-related causes, most of them in the developing countries.

But much also still remains to be done in the most "democratic" countries, especially in politics. The average proportion of women in positions of political responsibility is less than 10 per cent. In working life, statistics show that women work far longer while often receiving much lower wages than men, either because they work part-time, because they do low-paid jobs in the informal sector or simply because they are paid less than men for equal work. Women's work barely figures in official economic statistics and is therefore seriously underestimated. This also hampers women's access to credit.

■ What can be done in concrete terms?

— From UNESCO's point of view, access to knowledge and quality education for girls and women is the most important key to women's empowerment and to their full enjoyment of human rights. At present nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterate are girls and women. One out of three adult women in the world today cannot read or write. In most parts of the world, girls are under-represented at every school level. In general, their representation lessens the higher one rises in the educational system. The obstacles appear early on: economic constraints, son preference, distance from school, early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

Unless the world community targets female illiteracy and commits itself more profoundly to removing the obstacles to girls' and women's access to good quality education and training, this gender gap will continue to exist. This is one of the twelve critical areas that form part of the Platform for Action to be adopted at Beijing.

■ What are the other main issues that will be raised?

— They range from the increasing burden of poverty on women, to inequalities in health care, violence, inequalities between men and women in power-sharing and decision-making, the promotion of universal human rights, women and the media, women and the environment and the situation of girl children.

■ Has everything been decided beforehand and will the Conference simply meet and rubber-stamp an agreed programme?

— Shortly before the Conference opens, there is still no consensus on large and vital parts of the Draft Platform. The most controversial issues relate to women's health, in particular women's reproductive health, and the human rights of women. The main confrontation is not between North and South, as was the case at the case ten years ago in Nairobi, but between fundamentalist groups of different religions and the women's human rights movement.

Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923), writer, New Zealand.

Barbara Hendricks (1948-), singer, United States.

■ What are you hoping will come out of the Conference?

— So much remains to be done. Take the question of development, for instance, which has been a main theme of all the women's conferences since 1975. Whilst development must always be rooted in its given social and cultural context, it has become legitimate to question traditions, norms, practices, cosmologies and religious customs that are based on the hypothesis of male superiority and that obstruct equality, especially at a time when traditional patriarchal ideas on women's place in society are gaining force.

We hope that the Conference will refine our understanding of the mechanisms of discrimination, exclusion and violence through the findings of research and through the unique experience and struggle of women. We hope that the participants will commit themselves politically and financially to the goals of the Conference, thereby providing an important incentive to transform societies away from the culture of violence and towards the building of a culture of peace. Such a culture can only be achieved within the context of equality between women and men, acknowledging that neither is in any way—morally, spiritually or intellectually—superior to the other. ■

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Years in which women obtained the right to vote in their countries on equal terms with men

1893 New Zealand
1906 Finland
1913 Norway
1915 Denmark
Iceland
1918 Austria
Georgia
Germany
Ireland
Latvia
Poland
Russian Federation
1919 Belarus
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Ukraine
1920 Czech Republic
Estonia
Slovakia
United States of America
1921 Armenia
Azerbaijan
Lithuania
Sweden
1923-1924
Mongolia
1924 Kazakstan
1926 Lebanon
1928 United Kingdom
1931 Spain
Sri Lanka
1932 Maldives
Thailand
Uruguay
1934 Brazil
Cuba
Turkey
1937 Pakistan
Philippines
1942 Dominican Republic
1944 Bulgaria
France
Jamaica
1945 Albania
Belize
Guatemala
Hungary
Indonesia
Italy
Senegal
Slovenia
Solomon Islands
1946 Cameroon
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Djibouti
Liberia
Panama
Romania
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Trinidad and Tobago
Viet Nam
1947 Argentina
Bangladesh
Japan
Malta
Mexico
Venezuela
1948 Belgium
Israel
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Niger
Republic of Korea
Seychelles
Singapore
1949 Bosnia and Herzegovina
Chile
China
Costa Rica
Croatia
Yugoslavia
1950 Haiti
India
Peru
1951 Antigua and Barbuda
Barbados
Dominica
Grenada
Nepal
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Sierra Leone
1952 Bolivia
Côte d'Ivoire
Greece
1953 Bhutan
Guyana
Sudan
Suriname
Syrian Arab Republic
1955 Nicaragua
1956 Benin
Comoros
Egypt
Gabon
Mali
Mauritius
Somalia
Togo
1957 Colombia
Honduras
Malaysia
Zimbabwe
1959 Madagascar
Tunisia
United Republic of Tanzania
1960 Canada
Cyprus
Gambia
San Marino
Tonga
1961 Burundi
El Salvador
Paraguay
Rwanda
1962 Algeria
Bahamas
Monaco
Uganda
Zambia
1963 Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Islamic Republic of Iran
Kenya
Morocco
1964 Malawi
1965 Afghanistan
Botswana
1967 Australia
Zaire
1967-1970
Yemen
1968 Swaziland
1969 Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
1971 Kiribati
Switzerland
1974 Jordan
1975 Andorra
Angola
Cape Verde
Mozambique
Papua New Guinea
Sao Tome and Principe
1976 Portugal
1977 Guinea-Bissau
1978 Ecuador
Republic of Moldova
1980 Iraq
Vanuatu
1984 Liechtenstein
1986 Central African Republic
1989 Namibia
1994 South Africa

Sources: United Nations Statistical Division, New York; Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva.

FIVE WOMEN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Five dynamic women whose portraits appear in a series of documentary films on women of the South made by American sociologist Judithe Bizot with UNESCO support

❶ In Mali, Aminata Traoré works to provide health education in poor urban districts and promotes community management of water supply points. She has founded a garbage collection co-operative in Bamako, organized cultural and study centres, and created outlets for local handicraft producers.

❷ In Pakistan, Khawar Mumtaz has set up a non-governmental organization, Shirkat Gah, which encourages women's education and the participation of women in public life. It is also concerned with problems such as arranged marriages and the discredit associated with the birth of a daughter. Shirkat Gah also campaigns against the violence of which women are victims and defends their right to education and work.

❸ In Costa Rica, where a group of women mobilized around the slogan "Homes, not slums!", Marta Trejos, Co-ordinator of the Feminist Information and Action Centre (Cefemina), instigated a programme to build 6,000 homes for families from the shanty-towns of San José. Helped by architects with whom they have designed purpose-built housing, San José women volunteers are working on-site as well as mobilizing support for the project.

❹ In India, Himalayan women who are determined to safeguard the forest formed the Chipko movement. A trained nuclear physicist, Vandana Shiva, has joined them to fight against the ideology based on competition that lies behind the excessive exploitation of the earth's natural resources.

❺ In Kenya, Wangari Maathai belongs to a group of women who in 1977 created the Green Belt Movement, an organization which seeks to halt desertification by encouraging tree planting and soil and water conservation.

Vandana Shiva and Wangari Maathai have each won a "Right Livelihood Award", presented by the "Right Livelihood Awards Foundation" in recognition of their "alternative contributions to the well-being of humankind." ■

PATRICK DEVAL,
French journalist

Women Nobel Laureates

MARIE CURIE
Physics: 1903, Chemistry: 1911

MARIA GOEPPERT MAYER
Physics: 1963

IRÈNE JOLIOT-CURIE
Chemistry: 1935

DOROTHY CROWFOOT HODGKIN
Chemistry: 1964

GERTY THERESA CORI
Physiology or medicine: 1947

ROSALYN S. YALOW
Physiology or medicine: 1977

BARBARA MCCLINTOCK
Physiology or medicine: 1983

RITA LEVI-MONTALCINI
Physiology or medicine: 1986

GERTRUDE B. ELION
Physiology or medicine: 1988

SELMA LAGERLOF
Literature: 1909

GRAZZIA DELEDDA
Literature: 1926

SIGRID UNDSET
Literature: 1928

PEARL BUCK
Literature: 1938

GABRIELA MISTRAL
Literature: 1945

NELLY SACHS
Literature: 1966

NADINE GORDIMER
Literature: 1991

TONI MORRISON
Literature: 1993

BERTHA VON SUTTNER
Peace: 1905

JANE ADDAMS
Peace: 1931

EMILY GREENE BALCH
Peace: 1946

BETTY WILLIAMS
Peace: 1976

MAIREAD CORRIGAN
Peace: 1976

MOTHER THERESA
Peace: 1979

ALVA MYRDAL
Peace: 1982

AUNG SAN SUU KYI
Peace: 1991

RIGOBERTA MENCHÚ
Peace: 1992

Listening to Africa

The threat of unbridled selfishness looms over the strange world which has been gradually emerging since the implosion of the communist bloc. The age that is dawning is not the age of the individual but the age of individualism. It is not the fair play of free competition that is coming in but the iron law of the strongest versus the weakest. And so we are still witnessing the scandalous, morally unacceptable situation in which the poorest countries pay for the richest, in financial terms and in terms of talent. A world in which the poor countries become poorer every day because of the debts they have contracted to the rich is a sick world. It is iniquitous and absurd.

Worldwide financial and economic strategies are formulated heedless of the socio-cultural situation of the countries and partners involved. As in Molière's play *Le malade imaginaire*, "the patients are always wrong" and are to be prescribed the same medicine. Diversity is disregarded, and the specific natural and human resources, culture, history and outlook of each country are ignored.

These strategies are targeted particularly on Africa, which is seen as the region that is most refractory to their demands. Some claim that they are justified by defects or shortcomings that seem specific to Africa. They point to such factors as the instability of governments, the fragility of democratic structures, the persistence of tribal structures and the temptations of ethnic violence. It is true that Africa today is at grips with immense problems. But how can we fail to see, not only the downside, but the enormous potential of Africa, its reserves of enthusiasm, the formidable creative dynamism that is waiting only for an opportunity to express itself?

The forces of joy and freedom, of modernity allied to team spirit, of the kind of efficiency that respects human qualities all exist in Africa. What should be done is not to make Africans' history for them or to promote from outside a form of development that Africa would not want. It is to state clearly whether we want to use Africa's current weaknesses as a pretext for leaving it by the wayside of the road to development, or whether we want to help it to draw on its strengths and its potential, so that it can make its own way to development and become a full partner in the world community.

A moral imperative

But why help Africa in today's world, in which many feel that it is already difficult enough to help oneself?

In my view, the first reason is that the West has contracted a historical debt towards Africa. The current wealth, power and dynamism of the West are in large measure the result of the contribution exacted from Africa. This contribution in the form of people, hard labour, sacrifice and natural resources was exacted first in the form of slavery and later by colonization. In a massive and historically unprecedented haemorrhage, Africa was slowly drained of its lifeblood, its vital, creative and productive energy.

Today Africa is struggling to recover in a world whose guidelines, laws and command mechanisms have all been devised elsewhere. Africa must learn to operate within these guidelines, come to terms with these laws, and use these mechanisms, while at the same time reclaiming its own history, exploring its own democratic pathways and development priorities, and endeavouring to secure the material and technical resources for its own renewal. This is the first reason, a moral reason, for helping Africa.

The second reason is political and economic. The world, as we are constantly being told, is an integrated unit in which financial, technological and media flows know no frontiers, in which events are flashed instantaneously from one end of the world to another. This space-time continuum, however, is highly inegalitarian and functions everywhere to the benefit of a few.

If the application of the same rules to all is detrimental to a large part of humankind, then the rules must be changed. Market forces alone are incapable of providing social justice, equal opportunities and more human relations between individuals and between nations.

Since we are all on board the same ship at the height of a storm, it is in our interest to learn how to share tasks, to even out privileges and sacrifices, and to strengthen our sense of sharing a common destiny. The alternative is to face incomprehension, revolt and chaos. In other words, to face the threat of shipwreck.

A shared responsibility

But it is not enough to talk of the responsibilities of the developed world. Clearly, the responsibilities of Africa are no less weighty. Nothing can be achieved without determined and enthusiastic efforts by Africans themselves to bring about democratic and egalitarian development. More than anyone else, Africans know that the sources of the future are to be found within themselves, that it is from among themselves that the people, the ideas, the achievements, the innovations and the great reform movements will come to lift their continent to the level of partnership in today's world.

The paths to be taken and the quality and quantity of the efforts to be made form part of Africans' responsibility to themselves and to the rest of the world. No one can today claim to possess a magic formula for successful development. However, a number of conditions must be met if Africans are to assume their responsibilities fully. I would sum up these conditions, which are the same all over the world, in three words: democracy, justice and solidarity. There is a need to narrow the gap between civil society and the politicians, to reduce the disparities between the privileged and the deprived, between the powerful and the weak, between those who participate in the process of globalization and those who are excluded from it. There is also a need to overcome the unequal opportunities and levels of development between African nations by stimulating the moral, intellectual, productive and material energies of the entire continent.

As a Yaounde proverb puts it, "a single arm is not enough to cut up an elephant". Some projects are too ambitious and far-reaching to be successfully completed by a single person or a single people. This has always been the case, and never more so than today when we find ourselves in an increasingly interdependent world. What can the countries of Africa hope to achieve if each one goes its own way? What, on the other hand, is beyond their reach if they take advantage of the tremendous new dynamism that will result from the pooling of their energies and hopes?

In order to imagine the potential strength of this dynamism we need only think of all the ethnic conflicts that beset the continent and could be de-escalated by its union. Today's fears could become tomorrow's liberated energies and reconciled hopes. I am not thinking of an artificial, damaging form of unification that would undermine subregional or local characteristics, but of true union in accordance with major guidelines collectively chosen, union made all the more creative by its respect for the diversity of the forces on which it is based.

All different. Yet all united. Let us define and draw attention to Africa's collective and individual needs, and to the commitment of African countries to meeting those needs. Let us point out what African countries hope to receive from others and what they can contribute themselves. Above all, let us highlight what Africa has to offer the world and what the world needs so much. We all know that without wisdom knowledge cannot lead to happiness. And the breath of wisdom comes from Africa, as I know from my own experience. ■

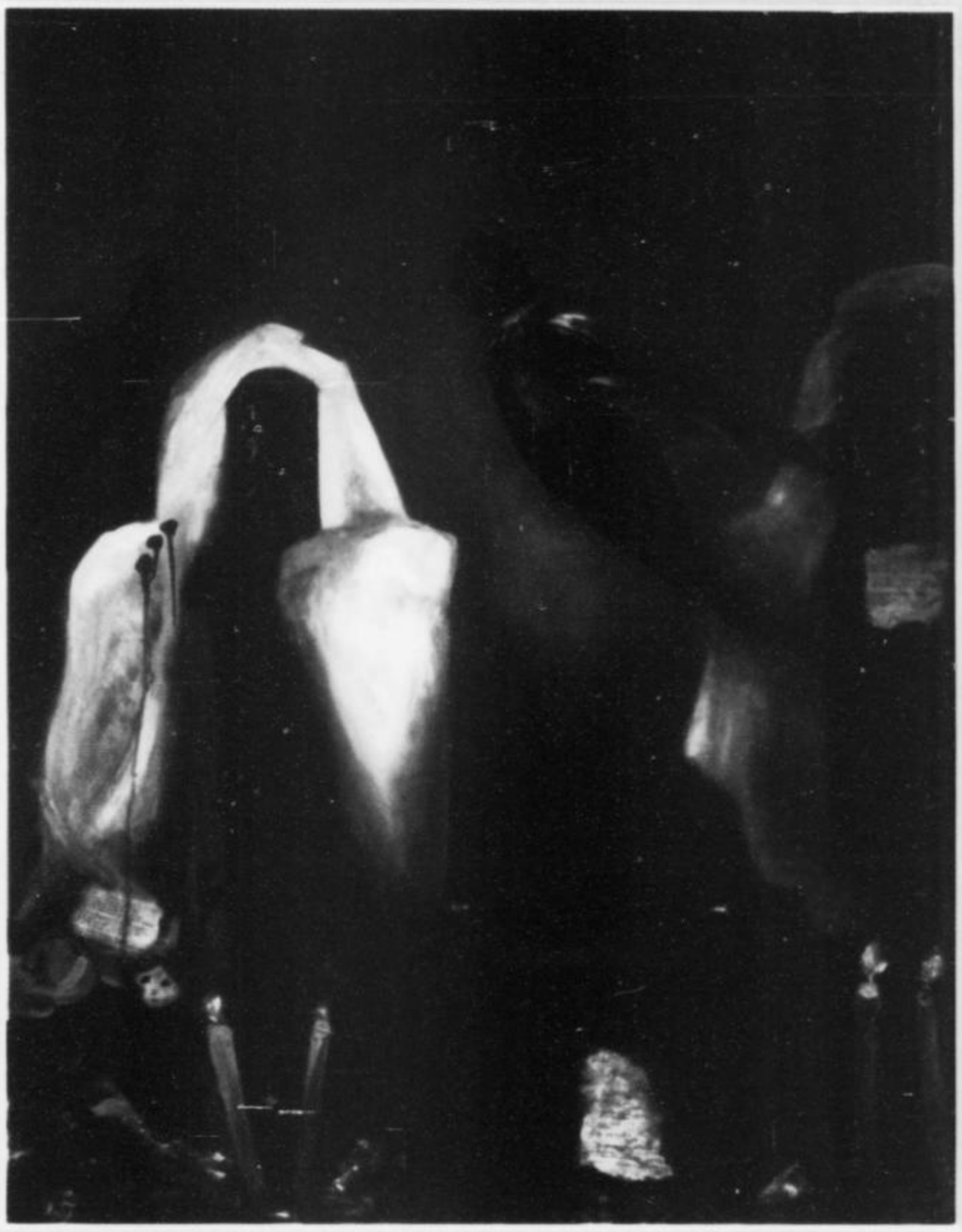
A triptych by Sofía Gandarias

In 1992, the Spanish painter Sofía Gandarias produced a triptych dedicated to Sarajevo, the beleaguered capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The three works are an artist's appeal for tolerance and solidarity.

Above, "Why?" (1992), oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm. Right, "The last journey" (1992), oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm.

"We are going to bury our child" (1992), oil on canvas, 162 x 130 cm.

SAMI NAÏR, a French philosopher, is Professor of Political Sciences at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland).



The art of inference by Sami Naïr

We know that paintings can speak. Not in the sense that they construct speeches, arguments or messages. If they do this, they are posters, tracts, works of propaganda. A painting, as the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty once said, speaks to the mind's eye by making the image an ideal representation—an idea in action.

All Sofía Gandarias's paintings speak. A consummate portraitist and a worthy rival of her predecessor Velásquez, she holds that painting is not a descriptive art but a form that has multiple meanings. For this reason she is interested in what is unsaid rather than what is said, in the virtual rather than the real, in the potential rather than the actual, in what can be inferred rather than what is clearly stated. Take, for example, her portraits of writers such as Carlos Fuentes and Juan Goytisolo, or performers such as Frida Kahlo, Rudolph Nureyev and Yehudi Menuhin. Juan Goytisolo's face cannot be dissociated from what is happening in Bosnia. The portrait of Fuentes is steeped in the strife-ridden, violent history of Mexico. These effects are achieved not through signposts or visual references but through an exceptionally detailed treatment of the face portrayed. All the history of Mexico and all that Fuentes has written can be seen in the hard, oblique eyes of the great Mexican master. The shedding of innocent blood, the conflict of a divided identity and the endless impact of creative discontinuities can be read in the majestic and irascible face of the great Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo.

Sofía Gandarias has thus invented a new genre that displaces the established borderlines between the arts, the divisions between genres and the restrictive identifications of things. Look at her series of paintings devoted to Nureyev: pervaded with undulation, movement, rhythm and plasticity, this is a blend of painting and dance. Happy are they, who, like the messenger god, Hermes, know how to occupy the ground between things, signs, time and space! They are the mediators who pave the way for evolving humanity. Sofía Gandarias may be one of their number. This, at any rate, seems clear to the eye that can register what is happening in these powerful and ingenious works where the possibilities of our civilization can be discerned, in both its barbarity and its grandeur. ■

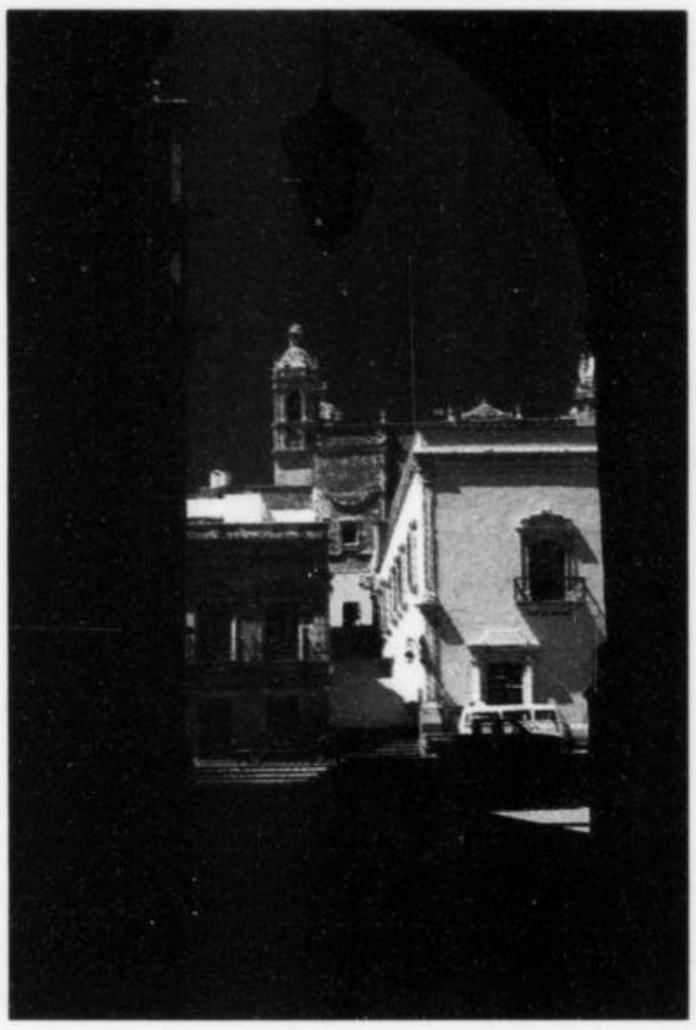
Baroque

Zacatecas

by Francisco Segovia

In December 1429, the Spanish conquistador Nuño de Guzmán set out from Mexico City at the head of an army of 500 Spaniards and 15,000 Mexican and Tlaxcaltec Indians. He was travelling west towards the mythical kingdom of the Amazons, but also to the very real riches of the vast region which corresponds to the present-day State of Michoacán. He had taken its cacique, Caltzontzin, prisoner and ordered him to be burned alive.

On reaching Michoacán, he pursued his conquest in the direction of the territories which were to become New Galicia. He then divided his army into three columns. He himself set out to explore Nayarit and Sinaloa, while one of his two lieutenants, Cristóbal de Oñate, marched on west towards the future city of Guadalajara. The other, Pedro Almindes Chirinos (Peralmindes) was to make for the unknown lands lying further to the north. So it was that when he reached the site of Zacatecas "of which he took possession with little or no opposition", as the chronicler Fray Antonio Tello relates, alluding at one



Silver mines brought fabulous wealth to the Mexican city of Zacatecas, founded in the 16th century. In 1993 the remarkable monuments in its historic centre earned it a place on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

and the same time to the ease of the venture and the apparent lack of strategic interest of this inhospitable and arid land. The conquistador did not suspect the fabulous mineral wealth which lay below the soil of Zacatecas.

SILVER MINES

As soon as they had taken possession of these regions, the Spanish soldiers began to search for the legendary riches of the northern provinces. In 1546, one of them, Juan de Tolosa, brought back from an expedition to the Cerro de la Bufa, the long rocky eminence at the foot of which the city of Zacatecas was to be built, several bags of ore which proved to be rich in lead and silver "of very fine quality". The fate of Zacatecas was sealed.

All through the sixteenth century, the territories conquered by Peralmindes were to remain the forward bastion of the conquerors of New Spain. They were also quite naturally to be used as the point of departure for the evangelizing missions and the first expeditions to northern Mexico and what are now California and Texas.

Despite the resistance of the Chichimec Indians, the mining centre of Zacatecas soon began to prosper as a result of the influx of Spaniards, indigenous people and black slaves captured in Africa and brought over to work in the mines. So it was that the camp set up by Tolosa at the foot of the Cerro de la Bufa spread gradually southwards along the course of the Arroyo de la Plata, whose former bed lies beneath what is now Manuel Hidalgo Avenue, the city's main artery. Because of the steepness of the terrain—Zacatecas lies at an altitude of some 2,400 metres in a mountainous valley—the architects were obliged to erect tall buildings on each side of the river.

Opposite page, view of Zacatecas with the cathedral in right foreground.

Left, framed by an archway, the massive towers and dome of the Jesuit church of Santo Domingo are silhouetted on the horizon.

Above, the 18th-century cathedral with its ornately decorated towers and façade.

'POWERFUL AND INTROVERTED ARCHITECTURE'

That is the reason for the very unusual character of this city with its irregular layout, in which the narrow, winding streets seldom afford an overall view of the buildings. For instance, it is virtually impossible to contemplate the façade of the cathedral, "the finest example of baroque architecture to be seen anywhere in the world", according to the historian Guillermo Tovar de Teresa, from a distance of more than two or three metres.

The first house in Zacatecas is reported to have been built in 1547, just before the fortress and the first metal foundry. By 1550, the city had already acquired a hospital (Santa Veracruz), and a chaplain had been appointed to watch over spiritual matters. In 1558, the Franciscans founded their first hospice. Later the Dominicans, Jesuits and

other religious orders were to leave their mark on the city by building a succession of churches, convents and charitable foundations. The diversity of their architectural concepts, together with those of the Spanish governors, shaped the city's appearance throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even much later, until the days of the revolution (1910-1921).

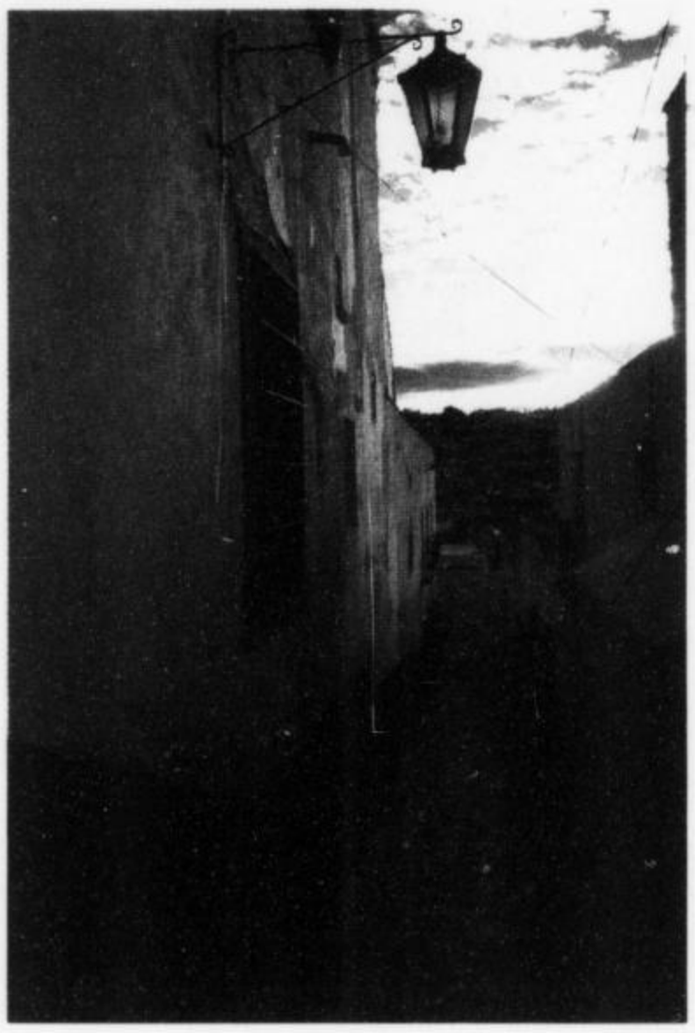
Raúl Toledo Farías describes this as "a powerful and introverted architecture, as befits a somewhat harsh climate", reflecting the sober and measured character of the inhabitants, which is far removed from tropical exuberance. However, there are also historical reasons for this sobriety. Although Zacatecas very soon became a city whose population was strongly marked by ethnic intermingling, the indigenous influences on colonial art are far less visible here than in southern Mexico.

In fact, Zacatecas as it is today is first and foremost a creation of the eighteenth century, a product of the development of the mines but also of efforts to spread Christianity. The convent of Our Lady of Guadalupe was founded by the Franciscans in the suburbs in order to spread the faith. It was inaugurated on 12 January 1707, but some parts of the buildings (such as the south tower) were not really completed until the nineteenth century. Today it houses an important museum of Mexican colonial art.

CATHEDRAL, CHURCHES AND MUSEUMS

The construction of the cathedral itself was fraught with vicissitudes. The present building replaced the Chapel of Santo Cristo, which in 1718 became the parish church to which a chapel was soon attached. The architectural complex began to acquire harmonious features in 1721. Only one of the three original façades was preserved. Work went on for a considerable time: the dome was rebuilt in 1848 and the south tower completed in 1904.

Almost opposite the cathedral, the Jesuit church of Santo Domingo, built between 1746 and 1749 by Cayetano de Sigüenza, is a magnificent example of Mexican baroque. Its eight altar-pieces in carved and gilded wood in the churrigueresque style, are the work of Felipe de Ureña and his son-in-law, Juan García de Castañeda. Taken over by the Dominicans again following the expulsion of the Jesuits, this monumental church was often used as a cathedral when the latter was closed for structural work.



An alleyway in the old town.

The former Jesuit College of San Luis Gonzaga (1616) stands next to this church. San Luis was famous throughout Latin America for the quality of his teaching (one pupil of this college was Father Antonio Núñez de Miranda, the spiritual father of Juana Inés de la Cruz, the Mexican poetess). Following the expulsion of the Jesuits and a brief interlude in the hands of the Dominicans, the college was converted successively into a barracks, a prison and a warehouse before being restored in 1981. Today it houses the Pedro Coronel Museum, named for a painter and sculptor from Zacatecas, whose rich and varied collections include ancient Greek and Roman objects as well as paintings by Antoni Tàpies and Robert Motherwell. The museum also contains an important collection of medals and 25,000 volumes which made up the libraries of the old convents (including 15,000 from Our Lady of Guadalupe alone).

The church of San Agustín has also had a checquered history. Consecrated in 1617, it was refurbished and consecrated again in 1782. Tovar attributes it to Andrés Manuel de la Riva, the architect of the famous church of La Valenciana de Guanajuato and its baroque convent. With the adoption of the Reform Act (separating church and state), San Agustín was sold to private buyers who turned it into a billiard hall and hotel! In 1882, the complex was sold again to the missions of the American Presbyterian church, which for religious reasons decided to demolish the main façade, which had been the architectural jewel of the city. The Catholic church regained possession in 1942 and it is now the bishop's palace.

AN ISLAND OF PINK STONE AND STUCCO

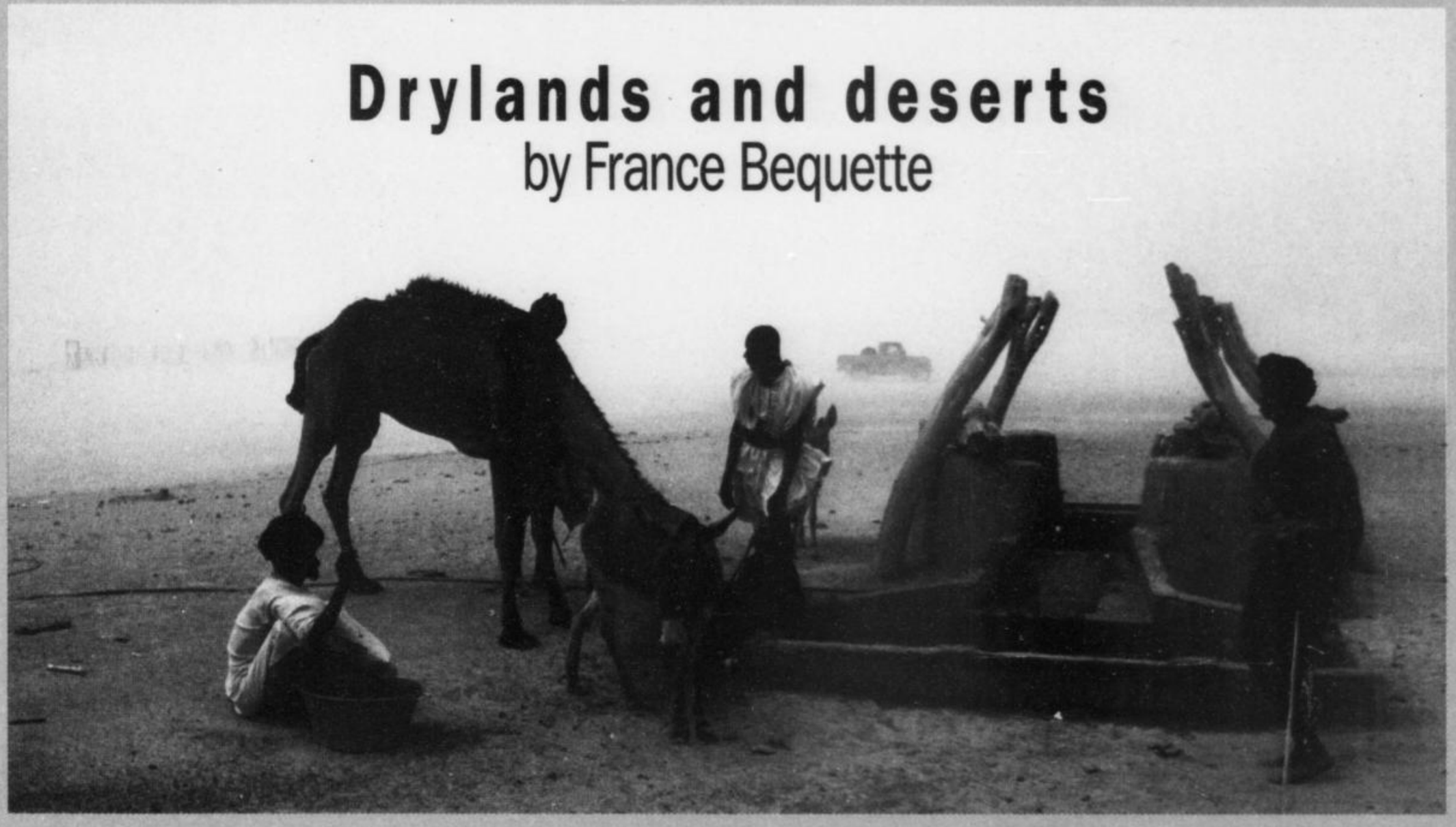
The remains of the church of San Francisco also deserve a mention. The church was built in the sixteenth century but today lies in ruins. On the other hand, the restored convent has housed a museum since 1990; the collections of Rafael Coronel, brother of Pedro and like him a painter and enlightened connoisseur, are exhibited here. He brought together several works by Diego Rivera and a unique collection of 5,000 masks. Last but not least, the Goitia Museum, outside the city centre, is also well worth a visit as it houses, in the former residence of the Governor (1948), the works of six artists who are thought to have come from Zacatecas: Francisco Goitia, Julio Ruelas, the two Coronel brothers, José Kuri Breña and Manuel Felguérez.

The civilian architecture of Zacatecas is in no way inferior to that of its religious edifices. One prominent example is the old house of "Gonzalez Ortega" which stands next to the cathedral and is today part of the Governor's palace. The two buildings look out over the Arroyo de la Plata, which is lined by a number of remarkable edifices including Mala Noche palace, Jesús González Ortega market and the Calderón theatre. A stroll through this labyrinth of narrow streets punctuated with little squares and distincitve buildings, is one of the charms of the colourful island of pink stone and stucco which is the historic centre of Zacatecas. ■

FRANCISCO SEGOVIA
is a Mexican poet, essayist, lexicographer and translator who formerly taught literature at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Among his published works are *Figuraciones* (1989), *Nao* (1990) and *Fin de fiesta* (1994).

Drylands and deserts

by France Bequette



A Tuareg well near Nouakchott (Mauritania).

"Around 900 million people living in drylands all over the world are directly affected by the phenomenon of desertification which is also responsible annually for the loss of some $42 billion in income: Asia accounting for $21 billion approximately, Africa $9 billion, North America $5 billion, South America and Australia $3 billion each, and Europe $1 billion," reports the September 1994 issue of UNESCO's environmental education newsletter *Connect*. "Of about 100 countries affected by what is now considered to be one of the most serious global environmental problems, 81 are developing countries, including a majority of the Least Developed Countries."

The stakes are high, and the solutions hard to find. Detailed study, however, has enabled scientists to rebut certain false yet persistent ideas that tend to shed the responsibility for desertification onto people who are actually blameless. These people are victims of the disappearance of traditional practices that were effective in managing dryland ecosystems and getting the most out of them. Jean-Jacques Pérennès, who has studied the North African environment for forty years, believes that small farmers have been forgotten by the agro-industry, by engineers and by the technocrats in charge of major international programmes.

DISTURBING THE BALANCE

In the past twenty years the definition of the term desertification has given rise to much debate. In 1994 the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification defined desertification as "land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities." According to Monique Mainguet, professor of geography at the University of Reims (France), "One third of the land-mass, from 35 to 37 per cent of our planet (45 million km²) are dry areas inhabited by 15 to 20 per cent of the world's population. These lands are found in the polar, temperate, sub-tropical, tropical and even equatorial zones."

Yet 69 per cent of these drylands that are used for agriculture are either degraded or seriously threatened by desertification. "Natural factors," *Connect* points out, "though capable of putting severe strain on the ecosystem, by themselves do not account for land degradation unless they are aggravated by human activities such as ill-planned cultivation practices, deforestation, overgrazing and faulty irrigation techniques."

Dr. Mainguet says that the imbalance has several causes. The first dates from the beginning of the colonial period, when pastoral societies lost their influence over arable farmers, and hence their power to

FRANCE BEQUETTE is a Franco-American journalist specializing in environmental questions.

Masai shepherds tend their flocks in Kenya's Amboseli National Park.

control access to land and water. Arable farmers occupied the grazing lands, and the herders were relegated for too long to unsuitable areas. Today, because of advances in veterinary medicine, the size of herds is increasing. With the best of intentions, outside funding sources are increasing the number of public wells without consulting local populations, and traditional practices have gradually been abandoned. The situation is further complicated by demographic factors, a reduction in the time when the ground is left fallow, the felling of trees for fodder and firewood, and urban growth that increases the demand for food, although farmers feel excluded from development because cereal prices are falling.

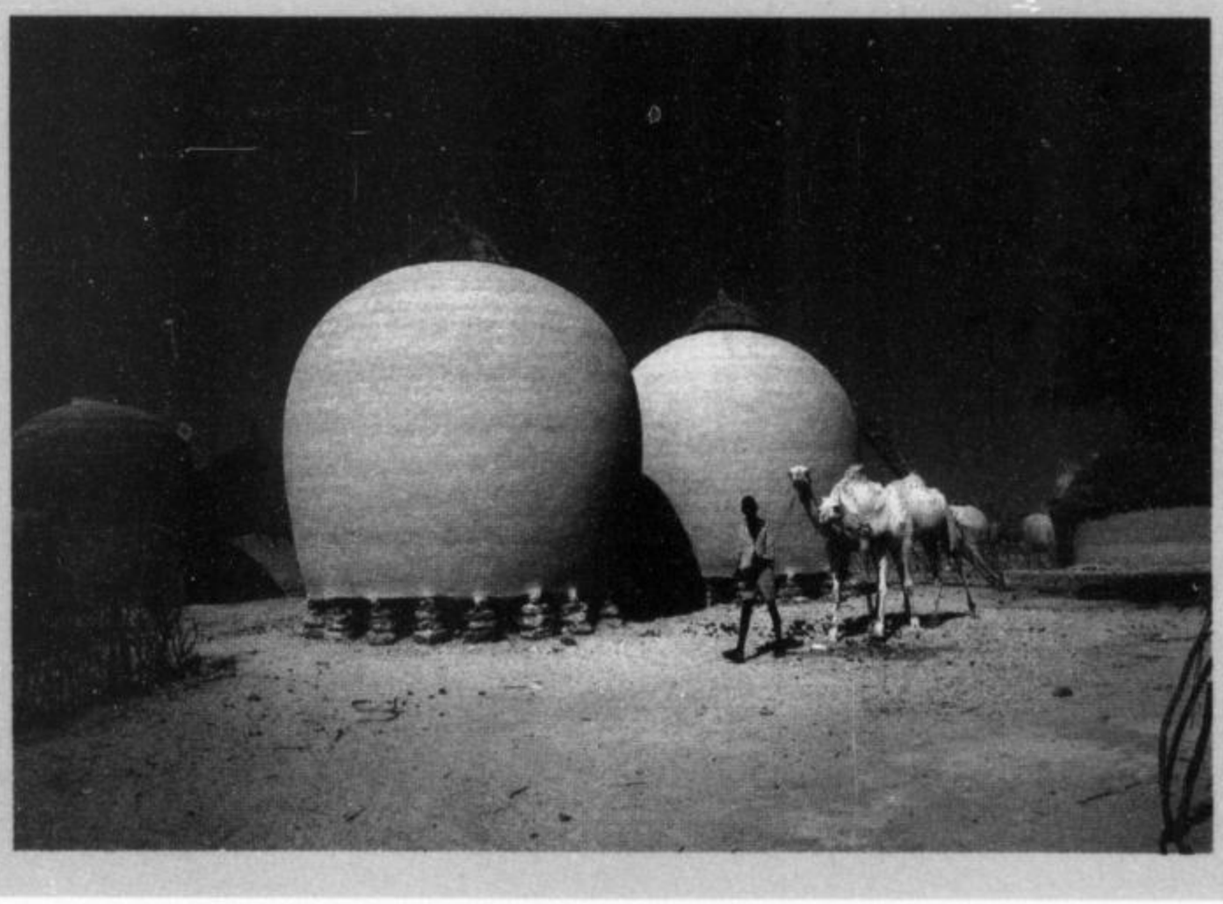
The British ecologist Edward Goldsmith is indignant because, he says, nomad pastoralists have been accused of being unproductive and of destroying the environment, whereas well-boring programmes that have led to overgrazing and the prohibition on burning grassland before grazing have increased the proliferation of tse-tse flies and reduced the nutritional value of dry-season grass. Goldsmith believes that in view of the disastrous failures of modern animal husbandry programmes, the traditional methods seem increasingly soundly based.

Monique Mainguet provides some interesting details about bush fires. Whether accidental or deliberate, these fires destroy the humus which retains water, mineral salts and microbial life in the topsoil. They are harmful in the middle and especially at the end of the dry season, but not at the beginning of the season when they free the soil from the preceding season's residual growth and provide the animals with good-quality fodder.

GOOD AND BAD METHODS

Human beings have survived in deserts only because they have been able to increase the quantity of water available to meet their needs. One example of wise practice is found in the semi-arid zone of Brazil's Nordeste region, where organic matter is used as fertilizer, and the people avoid ploughing the land so as not to cause compacting of the soil. Run-off water is captured in small ditches, and a layer of plant debris spread over the ground maintains moisture in the soil and turns into humus. Grazing land and certain crops are sheltered from the sun by bushes and trees. Fodder is stored in silos. In contrast to such extremely useful operations, large-scale irrigation threatens to cause salinity of the soil, as well as being costly and creating few jobs.

Constant irrigation is not a miracle solution, as some have thought. The October 1994 issue of the *UNESCO Courier* looked in some detail at the example of the Aral region. According to statistics compiled by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 65 per cent of the water used there goes to farming (especially irrigation) and 23 per cent



Millet granaries at Dogondoutchi in southwestern Niger.

Water cannon being used in an arid area of western Colorado (United States).

FURTHER READING:

- *Arid Zone Research Series*, a 30-volume series published between 1953 and 1969 by UNESCO, plus a map of the world's arid regions
- *UNESCO Courier*, January 1994, "Deserts"
- *L'homme et la sécheresse*, Monique Mainguet, Masson, Paris, 1995
- *The Earth Report*, Edward Goldsmith and Nicholas Hildyard, Mitchell Beazley London Ltd., 1988
- *Sécheresse* magazine, No. 1, vol. 5, March 1994

to industry, while 8 per cent is used for domestic purposes. At present, according to Edward Goldsmith, 90 per cent of the land in Egypt, 68 per cent in Pakistan, 50 per cent in Iraq, 38 per cent in Peru, from 25 to 30 per cent in the United States and from 15 to 20 per cent in India, Russia and Australia are suffering from salinization. Sodium chloride and sodium sulphate, and sodium, magnesium and calcium carbonates in the soil or in irrigation water accumulate at the root level of crops or, worse still, turn into a sterile, rock-hard crust.

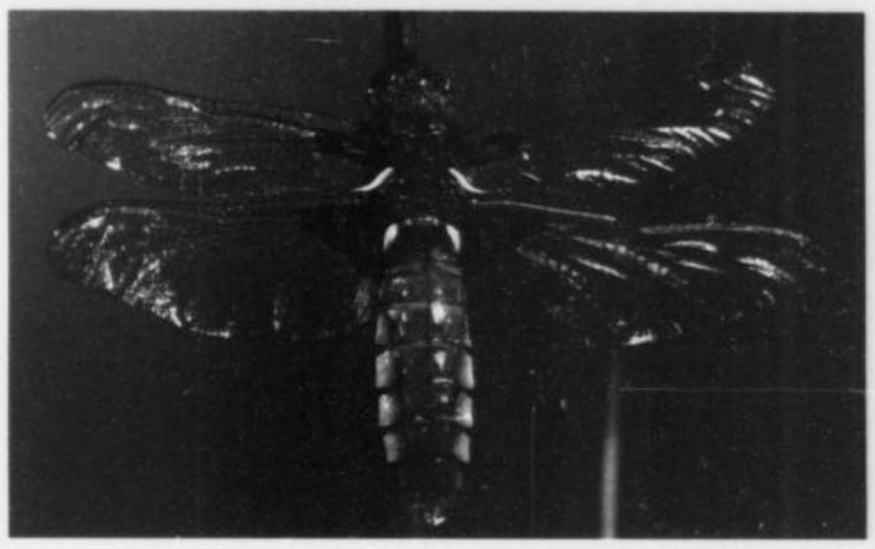
At an International conference on "Arid Lands Today and Tomorrow" held in Arizona in 1985, UNESCO environmental specialist Michel Batisse pointed out that although industrialized countries such as the United States and Australia have the resources to make the best use of their arid regions, this is not the case for countries like India, Kenya and Somalia. "Moreover," he continued, "the spectacular but somewhat artificial arid-land development schemes implemented here and there, most notably in oil-rich countries of the Middle East, should create no illusion. Heavily subsidized irrigation, careless mining of fossil aquifers, energy-voracious desalination of seawater—not to mention the towing of icebergs—are no answer to sustained development."

UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) has for many years been trying to encourage a harmonious balance between research, its applications, engineers, public authorities and people, who often seem to be ignored by international projects.

"Humanity's efforts to survive in arid regions," notes Monique Mainguet, "have helped to sharpen the human mind. Was it not in these areas that monotheism and the philosophy of continuing progress first took hold? The 20th century, a time of fewer certainties, has seen the high water mark of one phase of development, then the first signs of decline. I wonder if great works, because of their vast scale and their sometimes disastrous consequences, are not symptoms of a kind of loss of control by human genius and the prelude to a disturbing decline." Will the 21st century be a time when the idea that small is beautiful is rediscovered? ■

INITIATIVES

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE DRAGONFLY



The Council of Europe, whose headquarters are in Strasbourg (France), was founded in 1949 and today has 34 member states. As part of its commitment to finding solutions to the major problems of society, it is involved in a wide range of environmental activities, including the detailed study of endangered species of fauna and flora—one recent report notes that of 164 taxa of dragonfly in Europe, 65 are endangered.

The Council has established a European network of biogenetic reserves and awards a prestigious European Diploma to well-protected sites that are important because of their plant life, wildlife or landscape. Examples of award-winning sites include the Camargue National Reserve in southern France, the Abruzzi National Park in Italy and the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park. The Diploma may be withdrawn if the situation deteriorates: the Pyrenees National Park lost its award when a large building was put up in a ski resort there.

The Council has an Information and Documentation Centre on Nature Conservation known as Naturopa, which was set up in 1967 and operates through a network of national agencies in member states and through special correspondents in non-member countries. The Centre publishes a ten-language monthly *Newsletter-Nature* and a quarterly magazine, *Naturopa*. This year the Council has launched a year-long campaign: European Nature Conservation Year 1995. An impressive list of events is scheduled to take place in member states (no fewer than 500 in Germany, for example) incorporating many good ideas worth pursuing when the Year is over. Other forms of co-operation established by the Council include the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention), and the Convention on civil liability for damage to the environment. Far-reaching assistance and co-operation programmes for eastern and central European countries are also being implemented.

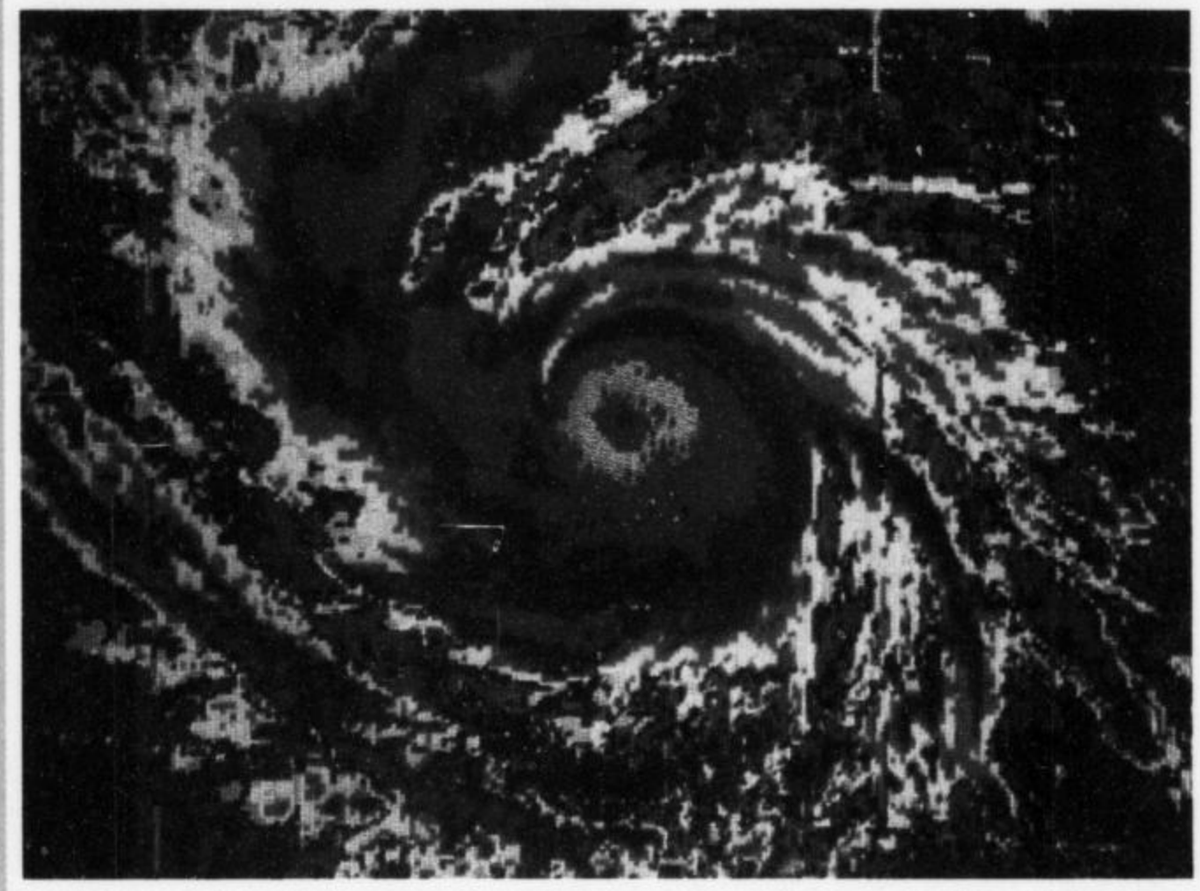
A model act on the protection of the environment has been prepared for central and eastern European countries wishing to adopt or modify environmental legislation. In short, the Council of Europe is a mine of information that the public is urged to consult. ■

Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France.
Tel: (33) 88 41 20 00, Fax: 88 41 27 15

WORLD

CHERNOBYL TO CLOSE BY THE YEAR 2,000

Earlier this year the European Union sent the then French Environment Minister, Michel Barnier, on a mission to Kiev (Ukraine) to discuss the Chernobyl problem. M. Barnier met Ukrainian Prime Minister Evgeni Marchuk and President Leonid Kuchma, who pledged to keep Chernobyl's No. 2 reactor closed and also to shut down the No. 1 and No. 3 reactors before the end of the century. In return, Europe and the world's most industrialized nations will help the Ukraine maintain the steel and concrete protective shell surrounding the core of the No. 2 reactor, manage radioactive waste and spent fuel, keep qualified staff on the site, promote the region's economic readjustment and supply Ukraine with energy. ■



DIAL-AN-EXPERT ON TORNADOES

The number of tornadoes is increasing. There have been more than 1,000 of them since 1990, and since 1953 they have caused the deaths of over 3,700 persons. Last year alone tornadoes injured 1,139 persons and caused damage amounting to $481 million. Now the American Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder (Colorado, U.S.A.) has issued a list of tornado experts and telephone numbers where they can be contacted. The causes of tornadoes are not precisely known, but their routes are. In the United States they are concentrated in what is known as "Tornado Alley", which runs north from central Texas through Oklahoma and Kansas into eastern Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota, and mainly occur in April, May and June.

For further information contact Joan Vandiver Frisch. Tel: (1-303) 497-8607; Fax: (1-303) 497-8610; E-mail: jfrisch@ucar.edu ■

ENDANGERED BLACK-HEADED GULLS

Viikki and Laajalahti are two sheltered, low sea bays with extensive reed beds, meadows and lush vegetation along the waterfront near Helsinki in Finland. Both are protected areas listed under the international Ramsar Convention (1974). However, the Viikki site has been badly eutrophicated by effluents and fertilizers, and the Black-headed Gull population, which used to number almost 10,000 nesting pairs, has been reduced to a few hundred individuals. ■

A BIRD WASHING MACHINE

Bird victims of oil spills are often killed not by the oil but by the stress of being handled by volunteers who try to wash and save them. The French oil company Elf and its affiliates, Sanofi and Yves Rocher, have developed a machine—a kind of cylinder with bars to which the bird's outstretched wings are attached—that allows the bird (whose head is covered with a protective hood) to be washed with a special shampoo that is sprayed into the cylinder and then rinsed off. ■

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

The Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago form a nation that grew rich on its oil reserves in the 1970s and early 1980s. As a result of oil-based industrialization and continuing urbanization, the country is now facing problems including industrial pollution, inadequate solid waste management, deforestation, soil erosion and flooding. The tourist industry, which represents 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, can only develop if the islands' rich wildlife and natural resources and its fragile coral reefs are protected. To help combat environmental degradation, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank are supporting the country's newly formed Environmental Management Authority with specialized advice and training. ■

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INTERVIEW

NELSON FREIRE

talks to Stany Kol

The Brazilian pianist Nelson Freire revealed his outstanding gifts and strong artistic personality at an early age. His international career, begun when he was very young, has taken him to cities on every continent, where he has given solo recitals and concerts with some of the world's leading orchestras and conductors. He often performs duets with the famous Argentine pianist Martha Argerich, with whom he has made many recordings. Here he talks about his life and art.

■ **How does a person become a great performing artist?**

— In my case it all started very early. I was a child prodigy. I was born in 1944 in Boa Esperança, a little town in Minas Gerais state, the youngest of five children. There were no musicians in the family, but my mother was a music lover and bought a piano with her first wages as a teacher. I think there were only three pianos in the whole town. She made my elder sister practise. I began to play a little myself, by ear, copying what I heard. I was rather sickly as a child and had several illnesses, but I loved the piano. When I was four, I told my parents that I wanted to take lessons.

■ **So they found you a teacher.**

— Yes, but he lived a four-hour bus ride away. I went to him once a week and had to get up at four in the morning. In those days there were no motorways. In fact the road was a dirt track, often drenched with rain. After twelve lessons, the teacher told my father that there was nothing more he could teach me and that I'd have to go to Rio de Janeiro, which was then the capital of Brazil, to get a decent musical education. And so we moved to Rio. It was a big decision for my parents, who had always made their home in Boa Esperança, where all their family lived. My father, who was a pharmacist, had to give up his profession and take a job in a bank.

I took tests at the Rio school of music. The professional musicians were impressed and said I was a child with "golden hands". But I was still only playing by instinct. I had a hard time finding a teacher. I was a rather unruly child. For two years I went from teacher to teacher. I even kicked one of them because he kept touching my ears, and I hated that. My parents were getting fed up and were thinking of returning to Boa Esperança, and then I was introduced to Lucia Branco, one of the few piano teachers in Rio I hadn't met. She was a well-known teacher who had been trained by a pupil of Franz Liszt. She advised my parents to send me to one of her students who, she thought, was mad enough to agree to work with me.

That's how I met Nise Obino, her assistant. It was love at first sight. With Nise I went right back to square one, including even the position of the fingers on the keyboard. She managed to get me to make remarkable progress. My relationship with her was very strong, the strongest in my life. One day when I was ill with a very high fever, she came to see me and put her hand on my forehead, and my temperature went down immediately. We were very close until her death last January, which was a terrible blow for me.

■ **Did you go to school while you were being trained?**

— Yes, just like any other child. My parents didn't want me to be uneducated. I

only practised the piano a couple of hours a day.

■ **When did you first perform in public?**
— When I was four. Then, when I was twelve, Brazil organized a big event, Rio's first international piano competition. I was invited to take part and was one of eighty contestants. Several of the others were already in their thirties and had a lot of experience. Some had even won prizes in other competitions. Lucia warned me that it would be good experience for me but that I shouldn't set my hopes too high. Even so, I was among the finalists. The final was an extraordinary event, a bit like a big soccer match. The Brazilians are mad about the piano. The hall was packed, and the audience was very excited. The president of Brazil, Juscelino Kubitschek, who had followed the preliminaries, offered me a two-year scholarship to go and study wherever I wanted to.

■ **And that's how you went to Vienna. . . .**
— Actually, I only went there two years after the competition, when I was fourteen. I chose Vienna because I wanted to work with Bruno Seidlhofer, an Austrian pianist who was very well known in Latin America. I'd played for him in Rio. I set off on my own because my parents couldn't go with me. I took the boat with Seidlhofer, who was returning home.

In Vienna I was all alone for the first time in my life. I was still quite young and didn't know a word of German or anything about the city. I found out what it meant to be independent. Those two years were very important for my personal development. It was then that I met Martha Argerich[1]. I didn't do much work, though, and didn't enter any competitions. I did not live up to expectations. Then the time came when my scholarship ended and I had to return home.

Returning to Brazil wasn't easy. At seventeen I was in the middle of an adolescent crisis, and I had to live with my family again after acquiring a taste for independence and living on my own. During the next year I entered a few competitions but never turned up on the day. Then in 1962 I was offered the opportunity of giving a concert in São Paulo. The concert was a big success and I recovered my enthusiasm and desire to play.

■ **You made a fresh start?**
— Not yet. Another failure was waiting round the corner, in Belgium where I'd gone at the age of nineteen to take part in the Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians International Musical Competition. When the results were announced, my name wasn't even mentioned. It was a bitter disappointment. But Martha Argerich was there too. Neither of us felt on top of the world, but we were together, and that helped a lot.

Going back to Brazil after a flop like that wasn't very enticing. Then I remembered that Anna-Stella Schic[2] had suggested that I should take part in a competition in Lisbon where she was a member of the jury. I called for information and was told the competition was starting in two days' time. I said I'd be there.

■ **Without knowing the test pieces?**
— I knew everything except for a compulsory piece that had to be played at the beginning of the competition, Carlos Seixas' Sonata in G-minor[3]. When I got there, I asked for the score of this sonata, and they gave it to me but thought I was mad. What's more, when lots were drawn for the order of performance, I had to play first. Anyway, I got down to work and threw myself into the competition. I walked off with first prize! Things really changed for me after that. For six very pleasant months I was asked to give a number of concerts in Austria, Portugese-speaking Africa and Madeira.

But other countries were a closed book for me until early in 1965 I received a telegram from Brazil from Ernesto de Quesada, an old man who had been Arthur Rubinstein's[4] first agent and went on to found the *Conciertos Daniel*. We had never met, but he'd heard about me from a member of the Lisbon jury. In his telegram he proposed that I should give three concerts in Mexico as a last-minute replacement for Alexander Brailowsky[5]. That was my first contract.

After that I returned to Brazil in style. I did tours in Spain, Argentina, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Peru and other countries. In short I started to earn a living. One day when I was in Caracas Martha Argerich's agent contacted me and asked whether I would fill in for Shura Cherkassky[6] and play Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra.

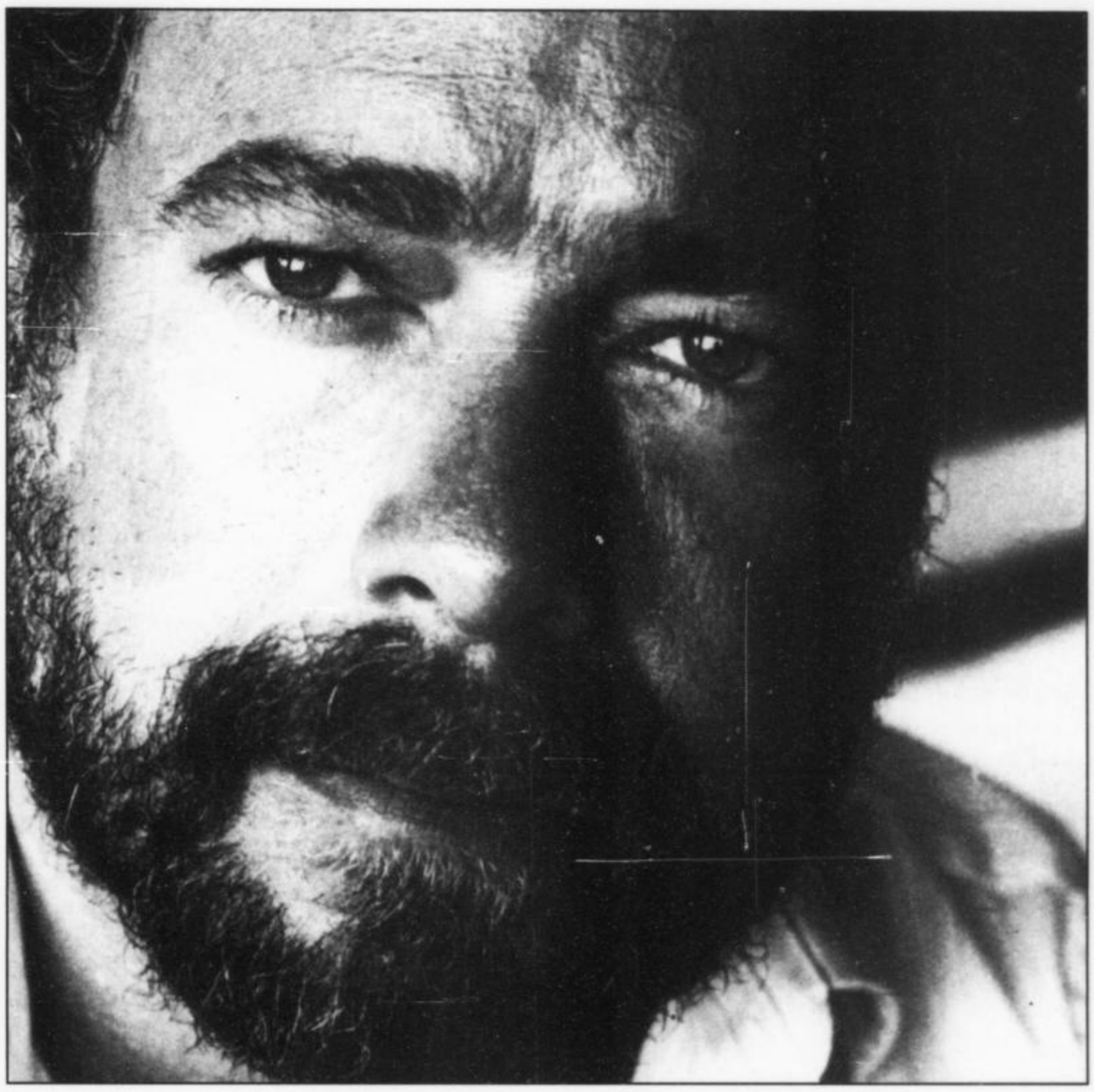
■ **Did you know the concerto?**
—When the Germans asked me that question, I said yes of course I knew it, whereas in fact I'd never seen the score in my life. And I had two weeks to learn it! I raced to the music shops in Caracas, but no one had it. I had to get it from New York. Then for fourteen days I worked on it. When I arrived in Schweinfurt I wasn't all that sure I could do it by heart, so before going on stage, I asked them to place a closed score of it above the keyboard, just in case. The next day the papers said "a new star is born". That's how I got a foothold in Germany in 1966 and began receiving concert offers.

I had a terrible experience in 1967. I was going to play in Brazil, at Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais state, and my parents decided to go with me. Along the way, the bus driver fell asleep at the wheel, and the bus plunged into a ravine killing everyone else on board, including my parents. *(silence)*

■ **When did you start playing duets with Martha Argerich?**
— Publicly, in 1968 in London at a festival run by Daniel Barenboim[7]. Martha was invited to play in a piano duet, and she accepted on condition that I should be her partner. We'd often played four-handed pieces at the house for the fun of it, but this was the first time we did so in public. We weren't very well prepared, and the performance was not excellent. We didn't play together again until 1980, twelve years later, in Amsterdam. From then on we really began playing together in concerts and for recordings.

■ **How do you explain the quality of your partnership?**
— First of all we have known one another very well for a long time. You know, the best piano duettists are often brothers and sisters or couples. People have to be very close in their personalities, tastes and sensibilities. What's more, Martha and I have always been open to new discoveries. I think we've kept clear of ruts and routines.

■ **Is there a typical style of Brazilian piano-playing?**
— After soccer the piano is the second great love of Brazilians. But while Brazilian pianists have mostly worked in Europe and have certainly been deeply influenced by Europe, it is generally accepted that they have a certain rhythm, a kind of vibration that you don't find elsewhere. For the same reason, some Brazilian pianists have inhi-



bitions and inferiority complexes. They try to deny themselves by becoming more European than the Europeans!

■ Doesn't that lead towards a certain standardization?

— There is a certain standardization of styles today, especially, I feel, in the United States. In my opinion it's due to changing ways of training musicians, to the increase in the number of international competitions and their growing importance in musicians' careers, to the money that is now involved in music and to the somewhat haphazard development of compact-disc production. In other parts of the world, including Europe, things haven't gone so far, and musicians seem to be resisting this move towards standardization. When I sit on competition juries, for example, I am struck by the quality and artistic temperament of many young Russian pianists.

■ Do you think that Brazilian composers, especially Heitor Villa-Lobos[8], are performed as often as they deserve?

— No. Brazil has a lot of fine composers, but Villa-Lobos is about the only one who is widely known. And even he, who produced a considerable body of work, isn't performed very often. I like his music and think I ought to play it. I do so in my recitals. I also play works by Santoro[9] and Mignone[10], but I'm not sure that this great tradition of Brazilian classical music has remained as active today as it used to be.

■ You perform all over the world. Is the public always the same?

— Clearly there are different publics in different countries and continents. I love to play in Germany. Music seems extraordinarily natural with German music-lovers, almost as if they become part of the music during a concert. In Asia—in Japan, for example—the public is always very enthusiastic, but it has a particular way of listening and communicating. Certain audiences, like the Germans, are open to all performers, well known or otherwise. In Paris on the other hand, people will only go to a concert to listen to a star. I have a fondness for Brazilian audiences that I feel intensely when I play for them.

But I believe that music is and will always be an international language. At most the same works are not heard in the same way in different places. There is another kind of problem. I sometimes wonder whether concerts and live performances aren't experiencing a kind of crisis because of the extraordinary development of compact discs. I think too much is made of them, and I feel that people are gradually losing the desire to go to concerts.

■ Talking about the United Nations, Villa-Lobos once said that if world leaders listened to more music, there would be fewer wars. . . .

— He was right. Certainly it is hard for a Brazilian to imagine life without music. Such a life would be a dreadful propsect. Talking of Villa-Lobos, the last piano work he wrote, in 1949, was *Hommage à Chopin* in commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the composer's death. Who commissioned it? UNESCO! ■

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1. Martha Argerich, an Argentine pianist born in 1941, has an extensive repertoire, including classical, romantic and contemporary music.
2. Anna-Stella Schic, a Brazilian pianist born in 1925, was a close friend of the composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, many of whose works she premiered.
3. Carlos Seixas (1704-1742), a Portugese composer whose work for the harpsichord is especially well known.
4. Arthur Rubinstein (1887-1982), Polish-born American musician, one of the 20th century's most famous pianists.
5. Alexander Brailowsky (1896-1976), a Russian-born American pianist particularly noted for his brilliant performances of the works of Chopin and Liszt.
6. Shura Cherkassky, (1911-), a Russian-born American pianist, who largely specializes in romantic music.
7. Daniel Barenboim, noted Israeli pianist and composer born in Buenos Aires in 1942.
8. Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), Brazilian composer. Largely self-taught, he drew inspiration from Brazilian folk and popular music which he investigated in his youth as an itinerant musician. He later did much to develop musical education throughout Brazil. His music combines indigenous Brazilian melodic elements with Western classical music.
9. Claudio Santoro (1919-1989), Brazilian composer. A student of Olivier Messiaen and friend of Heitor Villa-Lobos, he explored the possibilities of atonal music and then turned to musical forms closer to Brazil.
10. Francisco Mignone (1897-1986), Brazilian composer. He assimilated the style of the Brazilian waltzes that the *pianeiros* played in cafés at the turn of the century.

STANY KOL is Deputy Secretary of UNESCO's General Conference.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NAME THE CULPRITS

While reading your March 1995 issue ("Development—the haves and the have-nots"), I was struck by the fact that you simply described the deplorable conditions that exist in Chiapas, Moscow, Bombay, Rio de Janeiro and Soweto and did not say who or what is really responsible for this state of affairs, namely the existing power system. These countries will never be able to heal their wounds without far-reaching social, economic and monetary reforms on an international scale.

You merely describe what is being done by non-governmental organizations and associations whose efforts will have few long-term effects. That is not enough. You should speak out and accuse the culprits.

BERTRAND FERRO
Toul (France)

DEMOCRACY AND WORLD CITIZENSHIP

I should like to hail Federico Mayor's book, *La mémoire de l'avenir* ("The memory of the future"), in which he points out how necessary it is for everyone to take part in democratic life and to exercise their vigilance to promote respect for human rights. I am convinced that we must act on every level to make known the aspirations of internationalism.

PATRICK MICHEL
Citizen of the world

ROUND IS NOT ROMAN

I should like to draw your attention to the article "A light that shines through time and cultures" published in your January 1995 issue on the sun ("The sun—ancient myths, new technologies"). The town of Bram in France was founded on the site of a Roman settlement (vicus Eburomagus), but contrary to what the author of the article seems to say, its present circular form has nothing Roman about it (Roman town-planning tended to favour a rectangular layout); it dates from the Middle Ages.

J. DELMAS
Villenave-d'Ornon (France)

S.O.S. CHILDREN

I would like to suggest that the article entitled "S.O.S. Children" published in your December 1994 issue ("Religion and politics today") might have given special credit to the outstanding role played by UNESCO (principally on the initiative of the Polish educator Dr. Bernard Dreziewski) in the care and rehabilitation of war-handicapped children and orphans during the post-war years. Upon the suggestion of Professor Jean Piaget, seminars were organized—in which I actively participated—and an international non-governmental organization, the International Federation of Children's Communities (FICE), was set up under the auspices of UNESCO. Herr Hermann Gmeiner's effort to found the first S.O.S. Children's village was inspired by the UNESCO initiative in the 1946-1948 period.

H. Z. HOXTER
President, International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling (IRTAC)
London (United Kingdom)

FUTREMBEN!

When I compare the cast of the Egyptian statuette of the scribe Nebmertuf sitting at Thoth's feet that stands on my desk with the photo of it on page 23 of your April 1995 issue ("The origins of writing"), I can only conclude that the photo was reversed. This does not detract from the quality of the issue.

HUBERT PAVIE
Louveciennes (France)

Bravo for your sharp eyes (Ed).

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CORRECTION. Owing to an error in the production of our July-August number, the final question and answer in the interview with the Czech-born American film director Milos Forman ("How do you get on with American film technicians?") appeared (on page 64) as part of the interview with Nagisa Oshima. We apologize to readers for this mistake.

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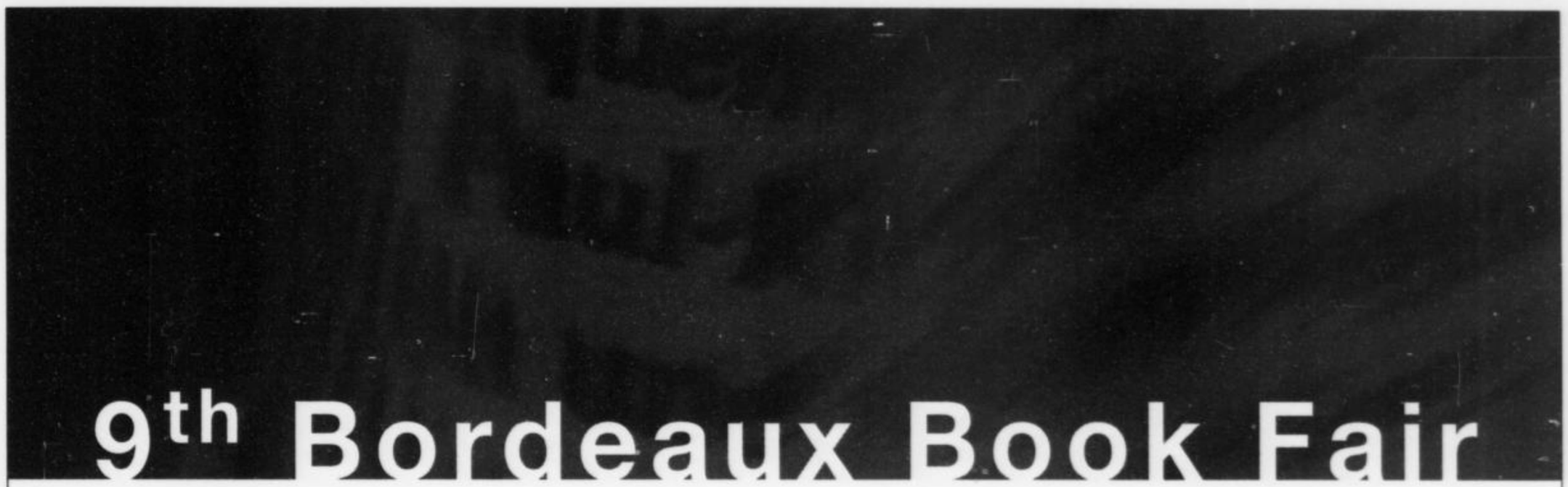

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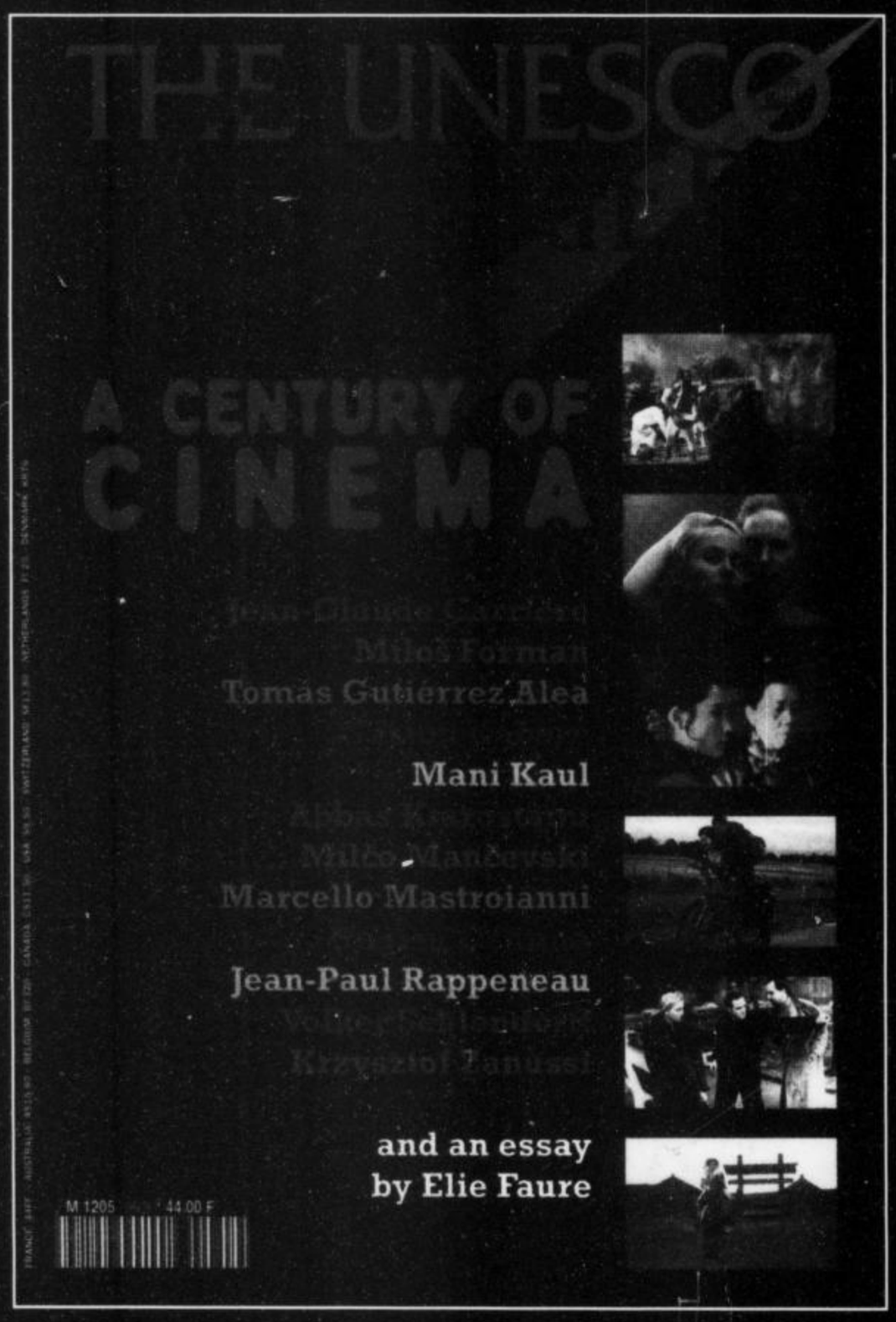
THEME OF THE NEXT ISSUE
(OCTOBER 1995):

THE UNITED NATIONS AT FIFTY

INTERVIEW WITH THE COLOMBIAN WRITER
GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

HERITAGE:
THE IGUAÇU FALLS

ENVIRONMENT:
WOMEN AND THE HEALTH OF THE PLANET



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